

BIBLICAL TOOLS AND STUDIES 42

E arly Christian Commentators of the New Testament

ESSAYS ON THEIR AIMS, METHODS
AND STRATEGIES

Edited by

Joseph Verheyden
Tobias Nicklas



PEETERS

EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMENTATORS
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

The Early Church has produced a diversified and influential tradition of commenting on the Bible. The tradition is rich in content, in methods, and in the goals that were pursued. Not infrequently the three go hand in hand, as method (in part) determines the way the contents are interpreted and the goals in turn determine the method one has chosen to follow. Early Christian authors have commented on the Bible in many different forms and formats. Among these, formal verse-by-verse commentaries take a special place, because of the extent of the comments made, the evidence they contain about the methods used, and the influence many of them have had on later generations of scholars. The Christian commentators made use of traditional approaches developed in Alexandria for commenting on Homer, but they also added to this specifically Christian goals and approaches. The diversity gave rise to fierce struggles, already in antiquity, about which methods can and cannot be used (the allegorical vs literal approach), but also about many other issues, among these the question of how exegesis can be made to use in disputes on doctrine, how to convince readers of the truth of one's position, or what should be dealt with in such encompassing comments on the Biblical text. Besides formal commentaries, early Christian authors also produced a wealth of homilies, often also quite exhaustive ones, but the former are distinct from the latter in that they claim or wish to be "scholarly" works, even if parenetic and moral instructions are never far off, and also in that several of them give direct information on the method used and on the goals the author had in mind (in the prologues, but also more indirectly, in the way the biblical material is dealt with).

The present volume offers a selection of papers read at an international colloquium held at the KU Leuven in December 2018. The colloquium was the ninth in a series of meetings that have been organised by the coordinators of the international research project *Novum Testamentum Patristicum* (NTP) in Leuven, Regensburg, Siegen, and Groningen since 2009. The 2018 encounter was hosted by the Leuven Centre for the Study of the Gospels and prepared by Tobias Nicklas and Joseph Verheyden.

In the past the meetings as a rule focused on specific themes (violence in NT texts, church hierarchy, the passion narratives, Christian anti-Semitism),

on one particular work (the reception of John in the second and third century), or on the reception of the New Testament in a specific context (Christian liturgy). This is the first meeting to focus entirely on a particular literary genre (the commentary), which has its own strategies, rationale, and readership and which has produced some works of immense influence throughout the history of biblical exegesis. For the coming years, similar approaches with regard to other genres are planned (e.g., homilies, polemical literature). As it turned out, the focus of the 2018 encounter was especially on the Latin tradition that is studied in seven essays, but the volume also includes three papers dealing with the Greek exegetical tradition, and there is plenty of room for a couple of follow-up colloquia on the same topic.

Carl Johan Berglund studies what may well be the oldest biblical commentary we know of. He surveys the reception of Heracleon's *Hypomnemata* in ancient sources and a good selection of previous research, before turning to the text and the methods and topics Heracleon selected for comment. Among these are his interest in vocabulary study, in evaluating the contents of the narrative told, and in the importance of characterisation. In the final section, Berglund shows how these interests serve a double theological purpose centred on salvation history and evangelisation.

Historically, it is a short way from Heracleon to Origen, though the Origen we meet in this volume is not, or not exclusively, the Johannine commentator, but rather the exegete in his full employ as commentator of the New *and* the Old Testament, with special focus on how the former takes its place in commenting on the latter. Lorenzo Perrone contributes a fine study on Origen as NT commentator and promotor of a spiritual reading of the Bible illustrating from several case studies how this aim is also realised in the way Origen tackles the Psalms in his series of homilies. Working from the strong conviction that the two parts of the Bible are fundamentally interconnected (Perrone speaks of "unity and harmony") and fully intent on demonstrating and strengthening this conviction in his exegesis, Origen shows a special interest in integrating New Testament material in explaining the Psalms either in a more general way or more specifically in the form of citations.

The third essay on the Greek exegetical tradition also focuses on the relation of Old and New Testament, now in the commentary on Paul's epistles by Theodore of Mopsuestia. Cornelis Hoogerwerf shows how Theodore uses material from the Old Testament to support his reading of Paul. Three types of approaches can be discerned. In his battle against all forms of allegorical interpretation, Theodore proposes to read Paul's discussion of specific topics from biblical history not allegorically, but as forms of *synkrisis*. In commenting on Paul's use of OT testimonia, Theodore is sceptical of using such

passages automatically as prophecies also in instances where there is little to go on in the original. The third approach is to use OT material to explain problematic concepts, and here again a major concern is to avoid any tendency to allegorising.

Victorinus of Pettau belongs to the earliest generation of commentators in the West. Konrad Huber studies his famous Apocalypse commentary. A Prologue is lacking, but quite some valid and solid information on the author's exegetical and hermeneutical principles can be unearthed from the commentary itself. Huber shows how the notion of "recapitulation" acts as a basic hermeneutical principle for commenting on this particular book of the Bible. Whether the same principle could also be used for explaining other biblical books remains an open question, but it certainly proved to be a most influential tool in reading the Apocalypse and steering the reader away from an exclusively pseudo-eschatological approach in which John's revelations are read as a reliable source for the end-time scenario.

Lukas Dorfbauer contributes an essay on the second big discovery of the past years in the field of early Christian exegesis after the chance discovery of a substantial body of Origen's Psalms homilies – the gospel commentary by Fortunatianus of Aquileia, the earliest known commentary in its genre in the West. Dorfbauer, who edited the text in 2017, discusses two important aspects of the work: the interest of the author in showing the unity of the gospels and his ardent support for the allegorical reading. He follows up with some reflections on the person of the author as an exegete and on the intended readers, most probably clerics in the inner circle of the author.

Marius Victorinus, a contemporary of Fortunatianus, was already a seasoned commentator before his conversion having published commentaries on Cicero. His commentaries on several of Paul's letters count among the first "scientific" works in the field. Joseph Lössl compares Victorinus' commentarial techniques in the works on Cicero and Paul, focusing on one aspect that characterise the commentaries on Paul – the interest in putting to use the biblical evidence in a theological dispute (i.e., the *ὑποούσιον* concept) both for one's own position and against that of the adversaries. This practical goal, informed by polemical and apologetical strategies, dominates over any interest in offering a synthesis of Paul's thought or the like.

The next essay deals with a mysterious figure of whom we do not even know the name. Active in Rome under the pontificate of pope Damasus (366-384), "Ambrosiaster" was the first to publish a commentary on the whole corpus of Paul's letters (except for Hebrews). Stephen Cooper, co-author of an English translation of the commentary, discusses the method and format of the commentary and the prefaces, before focusing on the commentary on

Colossians in which the author warns for and fulminates against the dangers of all aspects of non-Christian worshipping, thereby showing (what he thinks is) the main intent of this letter that in his opinion is singled out by this concern. It is a fine instance of exegesis put at the service of polemics and dogmatics building on the great authority of the Apostle, and by the same token, enhancing that authority even further.

The greatest commentator of the Latin tradition is made the subject of Alfons Fürst's essay which focuses on the prologues of Jerome's commentaries. Fürst first deals with the explicit scientific character of the ancient Christian commentary, then turns to the phenomenon of the prologue, to end with a careful analysis of the particularities of Jerome's prologues. Fürst shows that not all *topoi* the reader might expect to find in a prologue are always present, but that Jerome (like other authors) uses them selectively according to their relevance and to his purpose. He also points out the vividness of these introductions, Jerome's indebtedness to Origen, and his importance for introducing the genre in the West.

Valentina Marchetto contributes an essay related to her PhD research on the history of exegesis of John 17,21 in the early Church. She concentrates on Augustine's use and interpretation of the verse focusing on several aspects, including the issue of exactitude in handling Scripture, the search for a balance between scholarship and pastoral concerns, the use of the verse in polemics and in dealing with dogmatical issues (the battle with Arianism), and its role in reflecting on how to reach and preserve unity in the Church. This diversified application shows "in practice" how scriptural exegesis can serve many purposes, but also how theorising and praxis are intertwined and how the former can be filtered out from the latter.

The last author to be studied in this collection stems from a period of transition. Heavily indebted to the past, he also inaugurates a future that in many respects will be very different of the first centuries of Christianity. Venerable Bede has a bridge function, as Sarah Foot emphatically indicates. First and foremost a teacher, Bede takes the reader on a journey to discover the true meaning of Scripture as the source of knowledge of the mysteries of Christ and his Church. This pedagogical aim is illustrated from the manual on hermeneutics Bede authored and from how he "practised what he preached" by analysing particular instances of his interpretation; it is also the major reason not to separate his New Testament from his Old Testament exegesis, as Foot formulates it in her conclusion.

Basically, three guidelines were followed in selecting the material: language, representative authors, and the wish to cover various parts of the New Testament. In the Greek tradition, Origen received a place of honour,

and through him also one of the oldest Christian commentators. The third Greek interpreter in this volume is Theodore of Mopsuestia, the major representative of the non-Alexandrian tradition, averse of promoting allegorical readings of Scripture. The Latins are represented by two of their greatest exegetes of the early Church (Jerome and Augustine), a recently rediscovered gospel commentator (Fortunatianus), two commentators on Paul (Marius Victorinus and Ambrosiaster), an influential commentator of the Apocalypse (Victorinus of Pettau), and an author who in addition to being a commentator in his own right was also instrumental in transmitting the legacy of the ancient Church to a new era (Bede).

The editors are well aware that this volume offers only a selection of what could have been dealt with. Exhaustivity was never our goal, because there is no way one can cover all the material in one such colloquium. As this initiative is part of the ongoing *Novum Testamentum Patristicum* (NTP) project, there will come other occasions to study related material and other aspects of the early Christian commentary tradition. It is just one stop on a long journey, but those who have made long journeys know that such stops, however briefly, can be as refreshing and enjoyable as it is useful and necessary to keep going. It is in that spirit the editors hope this volume will offer some help to fellow travellers.

The editors wish to thank the contributors for their essay and their participation in the discussions. Thanks are due also to the Flemish Research Foundation and the Frans Neiryck Foundation for generous financial support.

Joseph VERHEYDEN
Tobias NICKLAS

THE EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY OF HERACLEON'S *HYPOMNĒMATA*

For more than a century, there has been a clear scholarly consensus that the guiding principles of the earliest known New Testament commentary, Heracleon's *hypomnēmata* on the Gospel of John, are a number of "Gnostic"¹ or "Valentinian"² dogmatic points that Heracleon, "very often with excessive

1. The criticism directed toward the overly generalized concepts of "Gnostics" and "Gnosticism" is well known. M.A. WILLIAMS, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1996, systematically relates the commonly repeated characteristics of ancient "Gnosticism" to the textual evidence, and finds no common agenda of "inverse exegesis" (pp. 76-79, 94-95), rejection of the material world (pp. 113-115), hatred of the body (pp. 136-138), or a bifurcated choice between either asceticism or libertinism (pp. 160-162, 187-188). He does find the idea that certain people are predestined for salvation, but not as a common trait in "Gnostic" literature (pp. 211-212). Similarly, K.L. KING, *What Is Gnosticism?*, Cambridge, MA, Belknap, 2003, pp. 1-4, 30-33, 54, 152-153, 226-228, evaluates the various ways in which scholars have defined "Gnosticism", and concludes that the concept purports to describe a religious entity that never existed, other than as a way of denounce unwanted variants of Christianity. Some scholars have attempted to defend the concept: see B.A. PEARSON, *Gnosticism as a Religion*, in A. MARJANEN (ed.), *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society, 87), Helsinki, Finnish Exegetical Society, 2005, 81-101; R. VAN DEN BROEK, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 1-12; C.B. SMITH, *Post-Bauer Scholarship on Gnosticism(s): The Current State of Our "Knowledge"*, in P.A. HARTOG (ed.), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis*, Cambridge, James Clarke, 2015, 60-88. Others limit it to what is more commonly known as Sethianism: so D. BRAKKE, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2010, pp. 19-51. Others, including the present author, have preferred to study the texts in question within a wider perspective of Christian and non-Christian literature, in order to let similarities and differences other than the dogmatic ones become visible: see M.R. DESJARDINS, *Rethinking the Study of Gnosticism*, in *Religion & Theology* 12 (2005) 370-384, pp. 377-380; N. DENZEY LEWIS, *Cosmology and Fate in Gnosticism and Graeco-Roman Antiquity: Under Pitiless Skies* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 81), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2013, pp. 26-28; I. DUNDERBERG, *Gnostic Morality Revisited* (WUNT, 347), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2015, pp. 5-10.

2. As they refer to the students and later followers of an individual teacher, the concepts of "Valentinians" and "Valentinianism" are more well-defined than "Gnostics" and "Gnosticism", but there is no need to presume that these "Valentinians" viewed themselves as being in opposition to a standard version of Christianity. See M.A. WILLIAMS, *Was There a Gnostic Religion? Strategies for a Clearer Analysis*, in MARJANEN (ed.), *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (n. 1), 55-79, pp. 60-69; I. DUNDERBERG, *Recognizing the Valentinians – Now and Then*, in

wildness”³, attempts to read into the Fourth Gospel. This consensus has been based on the presentation of Heracleon by a single ancient author, Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-254) – but since his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* includes forty-eight of the fifty instances where any material from Heracleon is transmitted to a modern reader⁴, this unfortunate situation has typically resulted in nothing more than a brief and perfunctory lamentation⁵. Now, however, after Ansgar Wucherpfennig’s well-received argument that Heracleon is one of the first Christians to apply Greco-Roman literary criticism to a biblical writing⁶, and my own successful attempt at distinguishing more trustworthy references, such as verbatim quotations and non-interpretive summaries, from explanatory paraphrases and mere assertions in Origen’s presentation of Heracleon⁷, it is time to make a new overall assessment of Heracleon’s exegetical methodology.

T. NICKLAS *et al.* (eds.), *The Other Side: Apocryphal Perspectives on Ancient Christian “Orthodoxies”* (NTOA/SUNT, 117), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017, 39-53, pp. 40-41; P. PERKINS, *Valentinians and the Christian Canon*, in E. THOMASSEN – C. MARKSCHIES (eds.), *Valentinianism: New Studies* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 96), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2020, 371-399, pp. 371-373, 381.

3. A.E. BROOKE, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (Texts and Studies, 1/4), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1891, p. 48.

4. Forty-eight out of fifty-one, if one wants to count the reference in Photius (ca. 810-893), *Ep.* 134, as is done in BROOKE, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (n. 3), p. 103.

5. W. FOERSTER, *Von Valentin zu Heracleon: Untersuchungen über die Quellen und die Entwicklung der valentinianischen Gnosis* (BZNW, 7), Giessen, Töpelmann, 1928, p. 3, admits that Origen does not always quote Heracleon “wörtlich” but asserts that not only his direct quotations but also his indirect representations of Heracleon’s opinions can be taken as correct representations of the views of this “Gnostic” author. M.R. DESJARDINS, *The Sources for Valentinian Gnosticism: A Question of Methodology*, in *VigChr* 40 (1986) 342-347, p. 345, argues that the “Fathers” have reproduced the words of their opponents far more literally than the author of Acts ever did to Paul, and declares: “To cast doubt on the basic reliability of Origen’s quotations from Heracleon, for example, is to be unduly skeptical”. K. KEEFER, *The Branches of the Gospel of John: The Reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Library of New Testament Studies, 332), London, T&T Clark, 2006, p. 33, declares that “the consensus is that Origen faithfully represented Heracleon’s point of view, and quite likely his exact words”. His brief lamentation is located on page 32. T.J. PETTIPIECE, *The Nature of “True Worship”: Anti-Jewish and Anti-Gentile Polemic in Heracleon (Fragments 20-24)*, in L. PAINCHAUD – P.-H. POIRIER (eds.), *Colloque International “L’Évangile selon Thomas et Les Textes de Nag Hammadi”* (Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi. Études, 8), Leuven – Paris, Peeters, 2007, 377-394, p. 377, complains that “we cannot be sure about the authenticity of Heracleon’s voice as it is recorded by Origen”, but goes on to discuss (p. 386 n. 33) what Heracleon “states quite specifically” and “even more explicitly” without considering Origen’s mediation.

6. A. WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT, 142), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2002.

7. C.J. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon: A Quotation-Analytical Study of the Earliest Known Commentary on the Gospel of John* (WUNT, 450), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2020.

This paper argues that Heracleon performs his exegesis of the Johannine gospel in three distinct stages: First, he paraphrases the gospel passage to accentuate the features of the text he finds most relevant to discuss. Then, he analyzes the text in detail, using various methods of Greco-Roman literary criticism including word studies (γλωσσηματικόν), analysis of what is reported in the text (ἱστορικόν), and attention to narrative characters (πρόσωπα). Lastly, he applies the text to a theological theme of potential interest to his audience. Two such themes are apparent from the available material: the history of God's salvific actions toward humanity, and the process of leading people toward conversion to a Christian faith.

I. HERACLEON IN ANCIENT SOURCES

Apart from his position as the author of the earliest known New Testament commentary, almost nothing is known about Heracleon. Ancient authors generally describe him as a heretic teacher connected to Valentinus (ca. 100-175), one of several failed mid-second-century candidates for leadership of the Christian community in Rome⁸. In a refutation of Valentinus, Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130-202) briefly mentions Heracleon and Ptolemy as two other Christians who share Valentinus' opinions⁹. In a similar context, Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160-225) names Heracleon, Secundus, and Marcus as followers of Ptolemy, who allegedly had departed from Valentinus by taking the thirty divine aeons that populated his divine realm to be personal substances rather than aspects of a single deity, as Valentinus did¹⁰. The author of the *Elenchos* – often identified with Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170-235)¹¹ – presents Heracleon as an Italian follower of Valentinus, holding that the human Jesus received the divine Logos from his heavenly

8. Tertullian, *Val.* 4.1. Heracleon's double association to Rome (where Valentinus taught) and Alexandria (where Origen encountered his *hypomnēmata*) has caused some scholars, including B.A. PEARSON, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature*, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress, 2007, pp. 161-162, to speculate that he was "an Alexandrian who spent some time in Rome as a Valentinian teacher and then returned to Alexandria".

9. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.4.1.

10. Tertullian, *Val.* 4.

11. For an overview of the current debate concerning the authorship of the *Elenchos*, which is also known as *Philosophumena* or *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, see E. NORELLI, *Construire l'opposition entre orthodoxie et hérésie à Rome, au III^e siècle*, in G. ARAGIONE – E. NORELLI (eds.), *Des évêques, des écoles et des hérétiques: Actes du Colloque international sur la Réfutation de toutes les hérésies, Genève, 13-14 juin 2008*, Prahins, Éditions du Zèbre, 2011, 233-255; M. SIMONETTI, *Per un profilo dell'autore dell'Elenchos*, *ibid.*, 257-273; A. BRENT, *The Elenchos and the Identification of Christian Communities in Second – Early Third Century Rome*, *ibid.*, 275-314. For

mother, Sophia, at his baptism¹². Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215) presents Heracleon as “the most notable of Valentinus’ school” and sets forth two separate instances where Heracleon comments on material that seems to stem from the synoptic gospels¹³. Origen presents Heracleon as a personal acquaintance (γνώριμος) of Valentinus, and refers to his interpretations of the Fourth Gospel on four dozen occasions¹⁴. Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 393-466) also gives a list of adherents of Valentinus, including Cossianus, Theodotus, Heracleon, Ptolemy, and Marcus¹⁵. Students or followers of Heracleon are mentioned by Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 315-403)¹⁶, by Augustine of Hippo (354-430)¹⁷, and by Photius of Constantinople (ca. 810-893)¹⁸, which suggests that his *hypomnēmata* found readers long after his own time.

The vast majority of these authors mention Heracleon without demonstrating any deeper knowledge of his views and works¹⁹. Eugène de Faye laments that one learns almost nothing from them²⁰, Pier Franco Beatrice agrees that they supply very little information²¹, Einar Thomassen remarks that some of them seem to know no more about Heracleon than his name²², and PHEME PERKINS remarks that “even the fact that he composed a commentary on John is not attested until Origen”²³. Even his often-repeated association with Valentinus does not give us much to work on regarding his views and exegetical methodology, as Valentinus’ own writings are only fragmentarily preserved, heresiological descriptions of his opinions are untrustworthy, and students may innovate beyond what they learn from their predecessors. Thus, we possess no other evidence of his exegesis than Origen’s extensive

arguments for the traditional attribution, see M. MARCOVICH, *Introduction*, in *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* (PTS, 25), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 1986, 1-51, pp. 8-17.

12. *Elenchos* (also known as Hippolytus, *Haer.*) 6.p.4; 6.29.1; 6.35.6.

13. Clement, *Strom.* 4.9.71-72; *Ecl.* 25.1.

14. All of which are analyzed and discussed in BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 107-308.

15. Theodoret, *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* 1.8. Cf. BROOKE, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (n. 3), p. 32.

16. Epiphanius, *Haer.* 36.

17. Augustine, *Haer.* 16.

18. Photius, *Ep.* 134.

19. Photius is a possible exception, since he claims knowledge of how Heracleon expresses himself, without giving us any details.

20. E. DE FAYE, *Gnostiques et gnosticisme: Étude critique des documents du gnosticisme chrétien aux I^e et III^e siècles*, Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1925, p. 76.

21. P.F. BEATRICE, *Greek Philosophy and Gnostic Soteriology in Heracleon’s “Hypomnemata”*, in *Early Christianity* 3 (2012) 188-214, p. 189.

22. E. THOMASSEN, *Heracleon*, in T. RASIMUS (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (SupplNT, 132), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2010, 173-210, p. 173.

23. PERKINS, *Valentinians and the Christian Canon* (n. 2), p. 380.

interaction with Heracleon's work in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and the long passage quoted by Clement²⁴.

Unfortunately, Origen's and Clement's presentations of Heracleon's comments cannot be implicitly trusted to transmit Heracleon's actual words. Scholars have long recognized that ancient authors often adapt the style, wording, and grammar of what they quote from other authors to better fit their present argument. They modernize words, adapt verb forms, add clarifications to draw out the relevant point, cut their quotations mid-sentence to exclude anything irrelevant, and switch freely between verbatim quotation and free paraphrase²⁵. All of these practices were accepted – or even expected – among ancient authors²⁶. In order to estimate the dependability of a set of ancient quotations, we therefore need to establish the individual quotation habits of the quoting authors, based on cases where we have access to other versions of the quoted text, and can discern their adaptations by comparing²⁷.

Origen calls Heracleon's writing *hypomnēmata*²⁸, but this term has a wide semantic domain – ranging from learned commentaries on Homer via

24. Clement, *Strom.* 4.9.71-73.

25. P.A. BRUNT, *On Historical Fragments and Epitomes*, in *The Classical Quarterly* 30 (1980) 477-494, pp. 479-484; J. WHITTAKER, *The Value of Indirect Tradition in the Establishment of Greek Philosophical Texts or the Art of Misquotation*, in *Editing Greek and Latin Texts: Papers Given at the Twenty-Third Annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 6-7 November 1987*, New York, AMS Press, 1989, 63-95, pp. 71, 84-85; C.D. STANLEY, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Society of New Testament Studies. Monograph Series, 69), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 4-5; D. LENFANT, *The Study of Intermediate Authors and Its Role in the Interpretation of Historical Fragments*, in *Ancient Society* 43 (2013) 289-305, pp. 295-301; BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 78-83.

26. STANLEY, *Paul and the Language of Scripture* (n. 25), pp. 258-264, 289-291, 337, 342-343; C.E. HILL, "In These Very Words": *Methods and Standards of Literary Borrowing in the Second Century*, in ID. – M.J. KRUGER (eds.), *The Early Text of the New Testament*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 261-281, pp. 280-281; C.J. BERGLUND, *Evaluating Quotations in Ancient Greek Literature: The Case of Heracleon's Hypomnēmata*, in J. VERHEYDEN – T. NICKLAS – E. HERNITSCHKE (eds.), *Shadowy Characters and Fragmentary Evidence: The Search for Early Christian Groups and Movements* (WUNT, 388), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2017, 201-231, pp. 216-217.

27. D. LENFANT, *Peut-on se fier aux "fragments" d'historiens? L'exemple des citations d'Hérodote, in Krēma: Civilisations de l'Orient, de la Grèce et de Rome antiques* 24 (1999) 103-122, pp. 106, 119-121; EAD., *Intermediate Authors* (n. 25), pp. 293-301; BERGLUND, *Evaluating Quotations* (n. 26), pp. 216-217.

28. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.15/92 (SC 157, 196.42): ἐν οἷς καταλείπειν ὑπομνήμασιν ("in the *hypomnēmata* he [Heracleon] has left behind"). References to Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* are cited according to the *Sources chrétiennes* edition and will be given with book number, chapter number, and paragraph number. Chapter and paragraph numbers will be separated with a slash rather than a dot, to signify that the paragraph numbering is continuous throughout each book and not subordinated to the chapter numbering. *Origène:*

unfinished versions of historical monographs to personal note-books – and it is only from the contents preserved by Origen that we can conclude that Heracleon’s writing was a commentary. The term is also open to several different possibilities regarding the origin of the text: The *hypomnēmata* may have been produced by Heracleon as a public presentation of his teachings on the Gospel of John, it may constitute the notes from which he taught – with no intention for a wider readership – or it may be produced by his students, based on his teaching but without his active participation in the writing and distribution process²⁹.

II. HERACLEON IN PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

The groundwork for all modern studies of Heracleon was laid in 1891 by Alan E. Brooke, who identifies and presents fifty-one passages mentioning Heracleon in the writings of Origen, Clement, and Photius³⁰. He recognizes that Heracleon is, at times, “an acute and accurate observer”, states that at least one of his comments is “of great interest and surprising excellence”³¹, and remarks that “the expressions used with regard to the Passion are surprisingly literal for a Gnostic”³². Nevertheless, he never questions the heresiologists’ accord that Heracleon subscribed to a “Valentinian” mythology similar to the one described by Irenaeus³³, and his analysis is dominated by the consideration of which “Gnostic” mythological figure Heracleon has found behind which Johannine character³⁴. He asserts that

Commentaire sur saint Jean, tomes I-IV, ed. C. BLANC (SC, 120bis.157.222.290), Paris, Cerf, 1966-75; ²1996-2006.

29. Cf. STANLEY, *Paul and the Language of Scripture* (n. 25), pp. 73-79; T. DORANDI, *Le stylet et la tablette: Dans le secret des auteurs antiques* (L’Âne d’or, 12), Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2000, pp. 27-31; BEATRICE, *Greek Philosophy and Gnostic Soteriology* (n. 21), pp. 191-197; M.D.C. LARSEN, *Gospels before the Book*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 11-57; BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 318-322. PERKINS, *Valentinians and the Christian Canon* (n. 2), p. 380, suggests that “the commentary material employed by Origen belongs to the sort of instruction book for relative beginners which commonly circulated without attribution and often in a single copy”.

30. BROOKE, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (n. 3), pp. 50-103.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

33. Brooke is well aware of the possibilities of diversity and dogmatic development within the “Gnostic” movement, and argues that the system described in the *Elenchos* may represent a later development of “Heracleonism” than Heracleon taught himself, but never doubts Heracleon’s beliefs in the more fundamental aspects of “Gnostic” mythology. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 34-42.

34. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 42-47.

Heracleon finds the figure of Sophia represented by the Samaritan woman, even though Sophia is never actually mentioned in the material, and insists that Heracleon finds the demiurge to be typified by no less than three characters: John the Baptist in John 1,27, the royal official in John 4,46, and the eschatological judge in John 8,50. With the devil being symbolized by the Samaritan mountain in John 4,20, Brooke has identified “the usual triple division of men into *πνευματικοί*, *ψυχικοί*, *χοϊκοί*”³⁵. In his overall assessment of Heracleon’s exegesis, Brooke concludes that “his whole system of metaphorical interpretation is the most arbitrary attempt to read into the Fourth Gospel the details and teaching of the system in which he had been brought up”³⁶.

In retrospect, several different lines of criticism may be directed towards Brooke’s assessment. We have already mentioned two: Origen’s biased mediation of Heracleon’s words, and the difficulties of trusting the heresiologists generalizations of “Gnostic” theology. Thirdly, Brooke’s overall characterizations of both Heracleon’s and Origen’s exegesis as “arbitrary”³⁷ suggests that his grasp of ancient exegetical methodology is limited – which is understandable, considering that he wrote long before Karen Jo Torjesen’s and Bernhard Neuschäfer’s considerable advancements in understanding Origen’s exegesis³⁸. Fourthly, his conclusion that Heracleon is deliberately attempting to discover “Valentinian” dogmatics in the Fourth Gospel appears to be in some tension with modern hermeneutical reflection on the unavoidable interaction between presuppositions, preliminary assessments, and new information in any process of interpretation. Martin Heidegger, for instance, argues that a person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting a meaning for the text as a whole, based on his or her expectations on the text, and that understanding is constituted by the constant interplay between this projected meaning and the new data encountered in

35. *Ibid.*, p. 44. According to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.5, the disciples of Valentinus conceived of three kinds of humans – *πνευματικοί* (“spiritual”), *ψυχικοί* (“animated”), and *χοϊκοί* (“earthly”) – where the first category may end up in an eternal spiritual realm, the second at most in an intermediate animated realm, and the third category will end up in destruction regardless of their conduct. Cf. K. RUDOLPH, *Die Gnosis: Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion*, Leipzig, Koehler & Amelang, 1977, pp. 342-345.

36. BROOKE, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (n. 3), p. 48.

37. *Ibid.*

38. K.J. TORJESEN, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen’s Exegesis* (PTS, 28), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 1986; B. NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe* (Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, 18/1-2), Basel, Friedrich Reinhardt, 1987. Cf. also the contributions by L. PERRONE and V. MARCETTO in the present volume, 31-54 and 219-242.

the text³⁹. If an ancient reader discovered “Valentinian” dogmatic ideas in the Gospel of John, this process of discovery is more likely to have been grounded in an implicit expectation that these dogmatics are precisely what the gospel was written to express, than on any deliberate attempt to find them there⁴⁰. It might therefore be more rewarding to ask not if Heracleon is reading “Valentinian” theology into the Fourth Gospel, but if his understanding of the gospel is determined by an expectation to find this theology expressed therein.

Despite these difficulties, Brooke’s assertion that Heracleon reads his own “Valentinian” beliefs into the Fourth Gospel is repeated – indeed, often simply stated as fact – throughout most of the twentieth-century scholarship. Presuming that Heracleon’s starting-point is a standard “Gnostic” system attributed to Valentinus, Werner Foerster finds that Origen’s presentation of Heracleon’s views hits all the major points of the “Gnosticism” described by Irenaeus⁴¹, while Eugène de Faye concludes that Heracleon has modified Valentinus’ system to be more strictly monotheistic and to accept the physical death of Jesus⁴². François Sagnard is able to use Heracleon’s comments as a set of illustrations of Irenaeus’ “Gnosticism”⁴³, while Jean Mouson – observing that not all of Heracleon’s interpretations are allegorical – argues that Heracleon uses literal interpretations to speak about animated people (ψυχικοί) while his allegories regard the spirituals (πνευματικούς)⁴⁴. Yvonne Janssens commends Heracleon’s philological precision, enumerating cases where he notes nuances in John’s use of prepositions, but laments the creative imagination that allows him to see the Demiurge everywhere⁴⁵. As the sole disharmonic voice in this unified choir, Hermann Langerbeck notices that he cannot find Heracleon’s expected theology clearly expressed in the material preserved by Origen, and dares to question

39. M. HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, transl. J. STAMBAUGH, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 1996, pp. 139-144. Cf. H.-G. GADAMER, *Truth and Method*, New York, Continuum, 1994, pp. 268-273. On the differences between Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s views, see J. GRONDIN, *Gadamer’s Basic Understanding of Understanding*, in R.J. DOSTAL (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 36-51, pp. 42-50.

40. This is especially true if, as Brooke puts it, the “Valentinian” system is one in which the interpreter has been “brought up”.

41. FOERSTER, *Von Valentin zu Herakleon* (n. 5), pp. 3-44, 67-81.

42. DE FAYE, *Gnostiques et gnosticisme* (n. 20), pp. 75-102.

43. F. SAGNARD, *La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de saint Irénée* (Études de philosophie médiévale, 36), Paris, Vrin, 1947, pp. 480-520.

44. J. MOUSON, *Jean-Baptiste dans les fragments d’Héracléon*, in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 30 (1954) 301-322, pp. 320-22.

45. Y. JANSSENS, *Héracléon: Commentaire sur l’Évangile selon Saint Jean*, in *Le Muséon* 72 (1959) 101-151, 277-299, pp. 296-299.

whether Origen actually found “Gnostic” theology in Heracleon’s comments, or simply presumed it to be the basis of his exegesis⁴⁶.

In what may be the most influential study of Heracleon after Brooke, Elaine H. Pagels argues that the difference in how the “Valentinian” system is presented by Heracleon and in other “Gnostic” sources is due to the “Valentinians” maintaining two separate exegetical traditions: an esoteric one intended only for the initiated, and an exoteric tradition which presumed knowledge of a mythology to which it never referred explicitly⁴⁷. With this assumption, Pagels can use Irenaeus’ “Valentinian” system as a key to Heracleon even where there are no traces of the system in the available material. Despite Pagels’ recurrent assertions that Heracleon uses the term *πνευματικὴ* (“spiritual”) to describe the Samaritan woman, closer inspection reveals that every instance in which the Samaritan woman is designated as a spiritual person appears within Origen’s responses, or in attributions where Origen is clearly paraphrasing Heracleon’s thought⁴⁸. Pagels’ argument that Heracleon views the Samaritan woman as a symbol for spiritual people, and the son of the royal official as symbolizing the animated ones⁴⁹, seems therefore to be based not on Heracleon’s words, but on presuppositions about what a “Valentinian” Christian ought to believe⁵⁰.

In a detailed comparison of Heracleon’s methodology to that of Origen, Jean-Michel Poffet finds Origen’s allegorical interpretations preferable to those of Heracleon, since Origen is using the whole Christian canon as his exegetical backdrop, while Heracleon – in Poffet’s analysis – is limited to the particular Johannine story he is interpreting. Despite noticing that Heracleon performs both literal and allegorical interpretation in the tradition of Alexandrian exegesis, Poffet concludes that in the end, Heracleon views the Fourth Gospel as nothing more than a collection of symbolic elements to be interpreted within the “Valentinian” mythology⁵¹. Similarly, Antonio

46. H. LANGERBECK, *Die Anthropologie der alexandrinischen Gnosis: Interpretationen zu den Fragmenten des Basilides und Valentinus und ihrer Schulen bei Clemens von Alexandrien und Origenes*, in H. DÖRRIES (ed.), *Aufsätze zur Gnosis* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen / Philologisch-historische Klasse, 3/69), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967, 38-82, pp. 69-70.

47. E.H. PAGELS, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon’s Commentary on John* (Society of Biblical Literature. Monograph Series, 17), Nashville, TN, Abingdon, 1973, pp. 18-19.

48. WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 338-339.

49. PAGELS, *Gnostic Exegesis* (n. 47), pp. 85-86.

50. DUNDERBERG, *Gnostic Morality Revisited* (n. 1), pp. 143-144.

51. J.-M. POFFET, *La méthode exégétique d’Héracléon et d’Origène, commentateurs de Jn 4: Jésus, la Samaritaine et les Samaritains* (Paradosis), Fribourg/CH, Presses universitaires, 1985, pp. 160-65, 197, 275-81. Cf. THOMASSEN, *Heracleon* (n. 22), p. 185 n. 52: “Poffet is more

Castellano presumes Heracleon to be a “gnóstico valentiniano” and concludes that his commentary is a failed attempt at legitimizing “Valentinian” theology in a wider Christian context⁵². Castellano notices that Heracleon uses a detailed, literary-critical methodology, and that he frequently compares the Johannine rendition to its Synoptic parallels, which makes him less negative towards Heracleon than Poffet⁵³.

It is not until 2002 that a serious attempt is made at studying Heracleon’s exegesis somewhat independently of “Gnostic” dogmatics. In a full-length monograph, Ansgar Wucherpfennig compares Heracleon’s comments to literary-critical procedures established in Greco-Roman antiquity for interpreting the Homeric literature⁵⁴. Wucherpfennig is able to identify several established ancient methods in Heracleon’s exegesis – including *διορθωτικόν* (“textual criticism”), *γλωσσηματικόν* (“word studies”), *τεχνικόν* (“grammatical-rhetorical analysis”), and *ιστορικόν* (“analysis of what is reported in the text”). He concludes that Heracleon is an expert in ancient literary criticism⁵⁵. He also suggests that Origen’s presentation of Heracleon’s interpretation may be colored by later “Valentinian” dogmatic ideas⁵⁶, and argues that Heracleon should be studied independently from any closed “Gnostic” system⁵⁷.

concerned with polemicizing against Heracleon’s exegesis than in understanding it on its own terms, and is therefore less helpful for our purposes”.

52. A. CASTELLANO, *La exégesis de Orígenes y de Heracleón a los testimonios del Bautista* (Anales de la Facultad de Teología, 49/1), Santiago, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1998, pp. 15-22, 181-183.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-181.

54. The same procedures had previously been successfully used in order to analyze Origen’s exegetical methodology by NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe* (n. 38); F.M. YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; P.W. MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012. After Wucherpfennig, the same methodology has been traced among other early Christian scriptural interpreters by, among others, L. AYRES, *Irenaeus vs. the Valentinians: Toward a Rethinking of Patristic Exegetical Origins*, in *J ECS* 23 (2015) 153-187; W.A. LÖHR, *Editors and Commentators: Some Observations on the Craft of Second Century Theologians*, in P.F. BEATRICE – B. POUDERON (eds.), *Pascha nostrum Christus: Essays in Honour of Raniero Cantalamessa*, Paris, Beauchesne, 2016, 65-84; and B. STEFANIW, *The School of Didymus the Blind in Light of the Tura Find*, in L. LARSEN – S. RUBENSON (eds.), *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of Classical Paideia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, 153-181.

55. WUCHERPENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 42-45, 55-100, 372-381. Wucherpfennig’s conclusions on this point are corroborated by several of Origen’s responses to Heracleon’s comments, which reveal that Origen viewed Heracleon not exclusively as a heterodox teacher, but also as a fellow philologist. See C.J. BERGLUND, *Origen’s Vacillating Stances toward His “Valentinian” Colleague Heracleon*, in *VigChr* 71 (2017) 541-569.

56. WUCHERPENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 332-357.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-10.

While Wucherpennig's results regarding Heracleon's use of Greco-Roman literary criticism have been accepted by other scholars, his suggestion that Heracleon is reading "Valentinian" views into the Gospel of John has been met with resistance. Agnès Bastit, for instance, is strongly opposed to any attempt to question Heracleon's "Valentinianism"⁵⁸. She asserts that Heracleon reads "Valentinian" mythology into the Fourth Gospel⁵⁹, and complains that scholars dare to doubt that Origen understands Heracleon correctly⁶⁰. Having said that, Bastit makes valuable observations regarding Heracleon's methodology: she lauds Heracleon's attention to grammatical detail⁶¹, his discussion of motivations of narrative characters⁶², his appreciation for the Gospel of Matthew⁶³, and his ability to balance his dependence on "Valentinian" doctrines with attention to the Johannine text⁶⁴. In a similar way, Einar Thomassen accepts that Heracleon is a competent literary critic⁶⁵, but nevertheless bases his analysis on the notion that Heracleon presupposes a "Valentinian" system akin to those described by the heresiologists⁶⁶, and that his exegetical operations serve to justify these theological ideas⁶⁷. Most recently, PHEME PERKINS accepts Wucherpennig's conclusion that Origen is misreading Heracleon by presuming "a set form of Valentinian myth that includes a fixed tri-part division of humanity"⁶⁸, but still regards Heracleon mainly as a data source from which to draw conclusions on "Valentinian" exegesis⁶⁹.

In my own studies, I have questioned the two common assumptions that Heracleon's exegesis is determined by doctrines to which he never explicitly refers in extant material, and that every statement Origen attributes to Heracleon is equivalent to a verbatim quotation. I have analyzed how the various ways in which Origen introduces references to other writings correspond to

58. A. BASTIT, *Forme et méthode du Commentaire sur Jean d'Héracléon*, in *Adamantius* 15 (2009) 150-176, p. 151.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-170.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 158, 170-171.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-157.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

65. THOMASSEN, *Heracleon* (n. 22), p. 193.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

68. PERKINS, *Valentinians and the Christian Canon* (n. 2), p. 389.

69. Perkins' main point that second-century "Valentinians" should not be regarded as a separatist sect but as a network of readers and writers within the early Christian movement is attractive, but not strengthened by her insistence on presuming that the "Valentinians" were a unified group for which general conclusions can be made.

the extent to which he adapts the material to his present aims, needs, and style. Based on these analyses, I have been able to categorize Origen's references to Heracleon into four groups of varying dependability: (1) Statements attributed to Heracleon with a *verbum dicendi* (verb of speaking) and presented in direct speech (*oratio recta*) are considered *verbatim quotations*, where Origen relays Heracleon's actual words with only minimal adaptations, whether or not this is made explicit by use of a phrase such as ἀὐτᾶς λέξεσιν ("with the same words"). (2) Statements attributed with a *verbum dicendi* but presented in indirect speech (*oratio obliqua*) are taken to be *summaries*, where Origen aims to transmit Heracleon's actual point, but not necessarily his actual words, with adaptations aimed at brevity and clarity. (3) Statements attributed with verbs referring to Heracleon's thoughts rather than his words, such as οἶμαι or νομίζω ("think" or "believe"), are categorized as *explanatory paraphrases*, aimed to reveal the reasoning behind Heracleon's words, and how it conforms to "Valentinian" theology. (4) Statements presented without reference to Heracleon's words – in either context or attribution formula – are taken to be *mere assertions*, without any stated basis in his writing⁷⁰.

I have found that the farther we get from Heracleon's *ipsissima verba*, the clearer "Valentinian" theology is expressed. Origen's assertions refer explicitly to views such as the rejection of the Old Testament and the creator of the material world, as well as the division of humanity into earthly, animated, and spiritual people. The same views are often presumed in his explanatory paraphrases, but in the summaries and quotations, Heracleon seems to accept the Old Testament, regard Christ as the true creator, and believe that Christ's salvific mission is directed to the whole of humanity⁷¹. It is therefore likely that these "Valentinian" views were never expressed by Heracleon, and that Origen – based on the information that Heracleon was a disciple of Valentinus – simply presumed Heracleon to have them⁷².

70. C.J. BERGLUND, *Discerning Quotations from Heracleon in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John*, in B. BITTON-ASHKELONY et al. (eds.), *Origeniana Duodecima: Origen's Legacy in the Holy Land – A Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem. Proceedings of the 12th International Origen Congress, Jerusalem, 25-29 June, 2017* (BETL, 302), Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT, Peeters, 2019, 489-503, pp. 491-497; ID., *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 92-106, 309-312.

71. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 316-317, 328-342.

72. In a handful of his responses to Heracleon's comments, Origen seems to consider two different interpretations of Heracleon's exegesis, one in which Heracleon makes a valid philological point, while in the other he expresses heterodox theology. Origen ends up rejecting these comments, but his way of considering multiple alternatives suggests that Heracleon has not clearly expressed the heterodox views Origen presumes him to have. Cf. BERGLUND, *Vacillating Stances* (n. 55), pp. 553-556.

When it comes to Heracleon's exegetical methodology, I have explored how Heracleon – at various stages of his exegesis – makes use of one passage of early Christian literature to interpret another⁷³. When interpreting Jesus' mention of "the one who judges" (κρίνων) in John 8,50, Heracleon makes use of Rom 13,1-10, where Paul exhorts his readers to subject themselves to the authorities⁷⁴. Heracleon quotes Paul's words about the appointed servant "who does not carry his sword in vain" from Rom 13,4⁷⁵, before concluding that Jesus is referring to Moses – the source of the Old Testament legislation that is to be the basis for the ultimate judgment⁷⁶. When analyzing the healing of the son of a royal official in John 4,43-54, Heracleon not only draws parallels to the similar story of a servant of a Roman centurion in Matt 8,5-13, but also uses 1 Cor 15,53-54 to reflect on the mortality of the human soul, and 1 Cor 15,56 to draw out the connection between sin, the Law, and death in Paul's reasoning⁷⁷. Heracleon seems also to have used Jesus' parable of the foolish bridesmaids, which we know from Matt 25,1-13, to interpret the dialogue about non-physical foods in John 4,31-34, although a lacuna in the text prevents us from understanding how⁷⁸. Searching for allusions to previous writings was standard operating procedure in ancient literary criticism⁷⁹, as was the use of clearer Homeric passages to illuminate obscurer ones⁸⁰, but Heracleon's practice seems to go beyond these procedures and betray an early sense of Christian canon, where even biblical passages written by different authors are expected to

73. C.J. BERGLUND, *Literary Criticism in Early Christianity: How Heracleon and Valentinus Use One Passage to Interpret Another*, in *J ECS* 27 (2019) 27-53; ID., *How 'Valentinian' Was Heracleon's Reading of the Healing of the Son of a Royal Official?*, in M. TELLBE – T. WASSERMAN (eds.), *Healing and Exorcism in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity* (WUNT II/511), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2019, 219-239.

74. BERGLUND, *Literary Criticism in Early Christianity* (n. 73), pp. 37-39.

75. P.F. BEATRICE, *The Apostolic Writings in Heracleon's Hypomnēmata*, in A.-C. JACOBSEN (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (BETL, 274), Leuven, Peeters – Paris – Bristol, CT, 2016, 799-819, p. 806, identifies this reference as the earliest known quotation from Romans 13.

76. Passage 48 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 20.38/358-362 (SC 290, 330-332). Cf. also BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 305-308.

77. BERGLUND, *How 'Valentinian' Was Heracleon's Reading* (n. 73), pp. 224-232.

78. Passage 28 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.32/200-202 (SC 222, 142). Cf. BERGLUND, *Literary Criticism in Early Christianity* (n. 73), pp. 42-43; ID., *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 231-233.

79. R. NÜNLIST, *The Ancient Critic at Work: Terms and Concepts of Literary Criticism in Greek Scholia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 225-231.

80. R. PFEIFFER, *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the Hellenistic Age*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1968, pp. 210-211, 225-227; J. MANSFELD, *Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled before the Study of an Author or a Text* (Philosophia Antiqua, 61), Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln, Brill, 1994, pp. 177-179; AYRES, *Irenaeus vs. the Valentinians* (n. 54), p. 160.

elucidate one another⁸¹. Origen expects this practice, and even complains when Heracleon does not pay attention to the relevant passages (τόποι)⁸².

Considering this history of research, it is clearly time for a new overall assessment of Heracleon's exegetical methodology – based not on Origen's paraphrases and assertions, but on his summaries and quotations. Using such fragmented materials, it will not be possible to discern Heracleon's methodology in all its details, but we may still detect three distinct stages in his exegetical procedure: (1) paraphrasing the text, (2) detailed scriptural analysis, and (3) theological application. In the following sections, I will explore these three stages in some detail.

III. STAGE ONE: PARAPHRASING THE TEXT

As the first stage of his exegetical procedure, Heracleon seems to present a paraphrase of the Johannine passage to accentuate the features he finds to be the most interesting. This paraphrase then serves as the starting-point of his further reflections⁸³.

This practice is clear from two of Origen's longer quotations, in which Heracleon explicitly introduces explanatory paraphrases of specific statements by the Johannine Jesus, in order to explain how these should be understood in the literary context in which they appear. In the first of these, Heracleon appears to be in the middle of a longer reflection on Jesus' dialogue with a Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. He has reached John 4,16, where Jesus – as a response to the woman's request, in the previous verse, for the water that gives eternal life – asks her to go call her husband. Origen states:

In addition, as regards “he said to her ... (John 4,16)” Heracleon says (φησί): “It is clear that he [Jesus] is saying something like: ‘if you want to receive this water, go call your husband’”⁸⁴.

81. BERGLUND, *Literary Criticism in Early Christianity* (n. 73), pp. 39, 43-44, 52-53.

82. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.6/31 (SC 157, 152). Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 130-133.

83. The presence of such paraphrases in Heracleon's exegesis has previously been noted by POFFET, *Méthode* (n. 51), p. 62; and by WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 40, 78, 94, 161-163, 196, 202, 243, 277-278. TORJESEN, *Hermeneutical Procedure* (n. 38), p. 58, has noted the presence of similar exegetical paraphrases in Origen's homilies on the Song of Songs.

84. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.11/67 (SC 222, 66): “Ἐτι δὲ ὁ Ἡρακλέων πρὸς τὸ «Λέγει ἀντ'ἧ» φησί (Quotation 18.1) δῆλον ὅτι τοιοῦτό τι λέγων, «εἰ θέλεις λαβεῖν τοῦτο τὸ ὕδωρ, ὑπάγε φώνησον τὸν ἄνδρα σου»·

Judging from the quotation practices exhibited by Origen in other contexts, he is making two verbatim quotations in this sentence: one short quotation from the beginning of John 4,16 to specify to which Johannine passage Heracleon's comment refers, and one longer quotation from Heracleon's *hypomnēmata*, introduced by *φησί* ("he says")⁸⁵. From the second quotation, it is clear that Heracleon is paraphrasing John 4,16 to clarify its meaning when interpreted within the literary context.

In the second case, Heracleon is discussing the hearers' reactions to Jesus' statement in John 8,21: "Where I am going, you cannot come". Origen writes:

Word by word he [Heracleon] states: (*ἀνταῖς λέξεσίν φησιν ὅτι*) "The Jews thought the Savior said: 'I am about to kill myself and pass into destruction, to where you cannot come'"⁸⁶.

That Origen is presenting a verbatim quotation is in this case made abundantly clear by his long and specific introduction formula *ἀνταῖς λέξεσίν φησιν ὅτι* ("word for word he states")⁸⁷. Although Heracleon's introduction is less explicit than in the previous case, it is clear that he is paraphrasing Jesus' statement in John 8,21 in order to bring out how it was interpreted by the Jewish audience.

Once we recognize the formulation of explanatory paraphrases as part of Heracleon's exegetical methodology, we may trace the practice in a number of other instances, where Heracleon seems to be paraphrasing the Fourth Gospel rather than quoting it. When discussing Heracleon's interpretation of John 1,3 – "without him not one thing came into being" – Origen is quite upset that his predecessor has added "of that which is in the world and in the creation" to the Johannine text⁸⁸. This addition could be a paraphrase expressing Heracleon's interpretation of the verse, which includes the point that God himself exists prior to the act of creation⁸⁹. The practice recurs in other contexts. Heracleon's paraphrase "John acknowledged that he was neither the Christ, nor a prophet, nor Elijah" aptly summarizes the

85. Origen's practices when introducing verbatim quotations are established in BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 92-95. The theory is applied to this reference in pp. 196-197, where this reference is designated Quotation 18.1.

86. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 19.19/125 (SC 290, 122): *Καὶ ἀνταῖς λέξεσίν φησιν ὅτι* (Quotation 42.2) *ῥοντο λέγειν τὸν σωτῆρα οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ὅτι ἐγὼ ἔμαυτὸν διαχειρισάμενος εἰς φθορὰν μέλλω πορεύεσθαι, ὅπου ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε εἰσεῖν.*

87. This reference is analyzed and given the designation Quotation 42.2 in BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 285-287.

88. Heracleon, Quotations 1.5 and 1.6 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.14/100-101 (SC 120bis, 276): *τῶν ἐν τῷ λόσμῳ καὶ τῇ κτίσει.*

89. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 107-114.

dialogue between John the Baptist and the priests and Levites in John 1,19-21⁹⁰. Heracleon's addition "who alone are obliged to baptize" brings out the inferred basis of the Pharisees' question in John 1,25⁹¹, and his statement "He is already present, he is in the world and among humans, and he is already visible for all of you" seems to be an interpretive paraphrase of John 1,26b⁹². In addition, the "Six men have you had" that Origen finds in Heracleon regarding John 4,18 may be a paraphrase adding the woman's current husband to the five former ones⁹³, and the "You should know that the one whom you are expecting is me, the one who is speaking to you" seems to be a paraphrasing expansion of Jesus' brief reply in John 4,26⁹⁴. The statement "The disciples on whose account he had come to Samaria came to him" may be Heracleon's way of accentuating what he finds most important in John 4,28-42, where many Samaritans come to hear him⁹⁵. Lastly, the words "But why can you not hear my word, if not because your father is the devil?" appears to be a paraphrase of John 8,43-44, clarifying the logical connection between these two verses⁹⁶.

Heracleon's paraphrases appear not to be aimed at clarifying how the Fourth Gospel express "Valentinian" dogmatic points⁹⁷, but focused on understanding the text at hand. The points they draw out from the text seem always to be inferred from the paraphrased text itself or from its immediate literary context. The paraphrases also tend to appear at the beginning, rather than the end, of Origen's presentations of Heracleon's comments. This suggests that they are intended not as the final word on a

90. Heracleon, Quotation 4.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.15/92 (SC 157, 196): Ἰωάννης ὠμολόγησεν μὴ εἶναι ὁ Χριστός, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ προφήτης μηδὲ Ἡλίας. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 130-133.

91. Heracleon, Quotation 6.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.23/126 (SC 157, 226-228): οἷς μόνοις ὀφείλεται τὸ βαπτίζειν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 149-152.

92. Heracleon, Quotation 8.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.39/194 (SC 157, 274): Ἦδη πάρεστιν καὶ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ ἐν ἀνθρώποις, καὶ ἐμφανὴς ἐστὶν ἥδη πᾶσιν ὑμῖν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 153-155.

93. Heracleon, Quotation 18.7 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.11/71 (SC 222, 68): Ἐξ ἀνδραῶν ἕξ. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 197-201.

94. Heracleon, Quotation 26.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.28/172 (SC 222, 128): Γίνωσκε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος, ὃν προσδοκᾷς, ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 225-227.

95. Heracleon, Quotation 26.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.28/172 (SC 222, 128): ἤλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν δι' οὓς ἐληλύθει εἰς τὴν Σαμάρειαν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 225-227.

96. Heracleon, Quotation 44.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 20.20/168 (SC 290, 240): Διατί δὲ οὐ δύνασθε ἀκοῦσιν τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν, ἢ ὅτι ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστέ; Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 288-392.

97. Cf. BROOKE, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (n. 3), p. 48.

given passage, but as a starting-point for further reflection, as previously argued by Wucherpfennig⁹⁸. Origen's recurrent criticisms that Heracleon adds something to the biblical text that is not originally there indicates that the paraphrases were presented in such a way that they could be confused with actual quotations from the Gospel of John – that is, that they constituted the *lemmata* providing the structure of Heracleon's *hypomnēmata*⁹⁹. If Heracleon vacillated between quotations and paraphrases in his *lemmata*, this could explain not only Origen's difficulties with accepting the practice, but also some of the minor gaps in Heracleon's treatment, where Origen sometimes provides lengthy reflections on certain words and sentences without mentioning Heracleon's views: These details of the Fourth Gospel may have been absent from Heracleon's paraphrased *lemmata*.

IV. STAGE TWO: DETAILED SCRIPTURAL ANALYSIS

In what appears to be a second stage of his exegetical procedure, Heracleon also applies a number of established methods of ancient literary criticism¹⁰⁰. Origen's presentation does not permit us to discern much of an internal order in which Heracleon applied these methods, but the wide variety of methods used reveals him to be a competent ancient literary critic¹⁰¹. The methodological wealth available to ancient philologists will preclude us from presenting an exhaustive list of methods used by Heracleon¹⁰², and the following treatment will be limited to three prominent examples.

98. WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 40, 78, 94, 161-163, 196, 202, 243, 277-278.

99. Cf. for instance Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.14/100-101, Passage 1 in BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 107-114.

100. For the methodology of Greco-Roman literary criticism, see NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe* (n. 38), pp. 139-140; YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis* (n. 54), pp. 85-89; T. VEGGE, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen: Schule und Bildung des Paulus* (BZNW, 134), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2006, pp. 113-115; MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture* (n. 54), pp. 41-42; C.J. BERGLUND, *Interpreting Readers: The Role of Greco-Roman Education in Early Interpretation of New Testament Writings*, in F. WILK (ed.), *Scriptural Interpretation at the Interface between Education and Religion* (Themes in Biblical Narrative, 22), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2018, 204-247, pp. 225-236.

101. A conclusion previously made by CASTELLANO, *Exégésis* (n. 52), pp. 179-181; WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 372-381, 412; BASTITT, *Forme et méthode* (n. 58), pp. 174-176.

102. Cf. the abundance of analytical concepts identified in NÜNLIST, *The Ancient Critic at Work* (n. 79).

1. *Word Studies* (γλωσσηματιζόν)

One of the most important literary-critical methods in antiquity, γλωσσηματιζόν (“word studies”), were aimed at discerning what a particular word meant in its given literary context, with attention paid to its etymology, semantics, and – if possible – the idiom of the author in question. And there are several instances where Heracleon’s comments demonstrate that he is performing a word study. In reference to John the Baptist’s identification of Jesus as the ἀμνός (“lamb”) of God in John 1,29, Origen quotes Heracleon stating that this identification cannot be expressing the perfection of Jesus’ physical body, since such a perfection would be better communicated by referring to the adult male of the same species with the word κριός (“ram”)¹⁰³. When Jesus declares that God is πνεῦμα (“spirit”) in John 4,24, Origen quotes Heracleon commenting that “his divine nature is irreproachable, pure, and invisible”¹⁰⁴, and reflects that this may be stated “in order to specify in what way God is spirit”¹⁰⁵. And in the clearest example – commenting on Jesus’ accusation that his hearers are children of the devil, rather than of Abraham, in John 8,31-47 – Heracleon presents three different ways of interpreting the word τέκνα (“children”):

[Heracleon] makes a distinction that (Paraphrase 46.5) one must understand the term “children” (τέκνα) in three different ways: firstly by birth (φύσις), secondly by choice (γνώμη), and thirdly by merit (ἀξία). “By birth”, he says (Quotation 46.6), “is the one born by some parent, who therefore is called a child in the proper sense; by choice, when someone, who by his own choice performs the will of someone else, is called a child of the one whose will he performs; by merit, in accordance with how people are called children of hell, darkness, or lawlessness, or the offspring of snakes or vipers”. “For these things”, he says (Quotation 46.7), “do not beget anything of their own nature, for they are destructive and ruin what is thrown into them, but since they have practiced their works, they are said to be their children”¹⁰⁶.

103. Heracleon, Quotation 10.3 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.60/307 (SC 157, 306): Τὸ δὲ τέλειον εἰ ἐβούλετο τῷ σώματι μαρτυρῆσαι, κριὸν εἶπεν ἂν τὸ μέλλον θύεσθαι. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 160-163.

104. Heracleon, Quotation 24.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.25/147 (SC 222, 110): ἄχραντος γὰρ καὶ καθαρὰ καὶ ἀόρατος ἡ θεία φύσις αὐτοῦ. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 221-224.

105. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.25/148 (SC 222, 110): Οὐκ οἶδα δὲ εἰ ἐδίδαξεν ἡμᾶς ταῦτα ἐπειπὼν πῶς ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμά ἐστιν.

106. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 20.24/216 (SC 290, 262): Καὶ διαστέλλεται ὡς ἄρα (Paraphrase 46.5) τριχῶς δεῖ ἀκούειν τῆς κατὰ τέκνα ὀνομασίας, πρῶτον φύσει, δεύτερον γνώμη, τρίτον ἀξία· καὶ φύσει μὲν, φησίν, (Quotation 46.6) ἐστὶν τὸ γεννηθὲν ὑπὸ τινος γεννητοῦ, ὃ καὶ κυρίως τέκνον καλεῖται· γνώμη δέ, ὅτε τὸ θέλημα τις ποιῶν τινος διὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γνώμην τέκνον ἐκείνου οὐ ποιεῖ τὸ θέλημα καλεῖται· ἀξία δέ, καθ’ ὃ λέγονται τινες γεέννης τέκνα καὶ σκότους καὶ ἀνομίας, καὶ ὄφειον καὶ ἐχιδνῶν γεννήματα. Οὐ γὰρ γεννᾷ, φησὶ,

In a comparison with other instances in which Origen refers to previous writings, it is easy to recognize the latter two of the three references to Heracleon in this passage (Quotations 46.6 and 46.7) as quotations: they are complete sentences, presented in Heracleon's voice, with a simple *φησί(ν)* ("he says") inserted early into the sentence. The first reference, contrastingly, uses the unique introduction formula *διαστέλλεται ὡς ἄρα* ("He makes a distinction that"). Since the statement attributed to Heracleon repeats the key three terms from the ensuing quotation and describes its meaning, we may identify it as Origen's explanatory paraphrase of what Heracleon is stating in this context¹⁰⁷.

From the two quotations and Origen's paraphrase, it is clear that Heracleon is performing a word study of the term *τέκνα* ("children"), arguing that it can be understood in three senses: (1) a biological sense in which people are said to be children of their parents, (2) a more metaphorical sense in which the parental role is expanded to teachers and leaders, and (3) a purely metaphorical sense where people are described as the children of metaphorical animals or abstract concepts. While the first sense is based on natural birth, the metaphorical children are called so by merit of their choices and actions, and therefore bear some responsibility for which parents they have acquired¹⁰⁸. Heracleon's word study is clearly intended to clarify in what sense Jesus is using the imagery of children and fathers. Origen does not report Heracleon's conclusion, but we may safely infer that he found Jesus' hearers to be metaphorical rather than natural children of the devil¹⁰⁹.

2. *Analysis of What Is Reported in the Text (ιστορικόν)*

Another important method of ancient literary criticism, *ιστορικόν*, discussed the meaning of the text in view of its references to phenomena in the

(Quotation 46.7) ταῦτά τινα τῆ ἑαυτῶν φύσει φθοροποιὰ γὰρ καὶ ἀναλίσκοντα τοὺς ἐμβληθέντας εἰς αὐτά· ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἐπραξάν τὰ ἐκείνων ἔργα, τέκνα αὐτῶν εἰρηται.

107. The term *ὡς ἄρα* and the more interpretive verb *διαστέλλω* ("distinguish") also indicate that the reference is a paraphrase. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 100-104, 297-298.

108. Heracleon's list of examples – children of hell, darkness, lawlessness, snakes, and vipers – seems to be compiled from a study of 1-2 Thessalonians and a gospel tradition similar to Matt 23,13-36. See BERGLUND, *Literary Criticism in Early Christianity* (n. 73), pp. 39-42.

109. On this point I agree with THOMASSEN, *Heracleon* (n. 22), pp. 190-192; E. THOMASSEN, *Saved by Nature? The Question of Human Races and Soteriological Determinism in Valentinianism*, in C. MARKSCHIES – J. VAN OORT (eds.), *Zugänge zur Gnosis* (Patristic Studies, 12), Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA, Peeters, 2013, 129-150, p. 137.

real world. In a historical narrative such as the gospels, this would mostly concern historical data, but could potentially include information gathered from any area of human knowledge.

That Heracleon is taking information from history and other areas of knowledge into account when interpreting the Gospel of John is clear from a number of his comments. In reference to the inquiring priests and Levites in John 1,19, for instance, Heracleon remarks that it was appropriate for the Levites to take an interest in John, who also belonged to the Levite tribe¹¹⁰. Likewise, when Jesus remarks that “the salvation is from the Jews” in John 4,22, Heracleon explains that this is true because Jesus “was born in Judaea” – and adds that the salvation is from (ἐκ) but not among (ἐν) the Jews, since not all Jews have accepted Christ¹¹¹. Similar historical aims seem to be in place when Heracleon remarks that the βασιλικός (“royal official”) of John 4,46 may be “a little king, appointed to a small kingdom by a higher king”, and informs his readers of the geographical location of Capernaum¹¹².

When he interprets Jesus’ remarks about the sowers and the reapers in John 4,36-38, Heracleon draws parallels to real-world agricultural workers, remarks that the reapers cannot reap before the sowers have sown¹¹³, and expands on the considerable differences between the two tasks:

The labor of those who sow is not the same as that of those who reap. For the former ones sow by digging in the earth in frost, water, and labor, and through the whole winter they take care of hoeing and picking the weeds. But the latter ones come to a ripe crop in the summer, and enjoy themselves while they reap¹¹⁴.

110. Heracleon, Quotation 5.9 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.21/115 (SC 157, 214): ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκ τῆς λευϊτικῆς φυλῆς ἦν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 144-146. It is unclear where Heracleon has found the information that the Baptist is a Levite, but possible sources include Luke 1,5 and the *Gospel of the Ebionites* quoted in Epiphanius, *Haer.* 30.13.6 (GCS 25, 350). Cf. BERGLUND, *Literary Criticism in Early Christianity* (n. 73), p. 43.

111. Heracleon, Quotation 22.3 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.19/115 (SC 222, 92): ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐγενήθη. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 214-217.

112. Heracleon, Quotation 40.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.60/416 (SC 222, 262): μικρὸς τις βασιλεὺς ὑπὸ καθολικοῦ βασιλέως τεταγμένος ἐπὶ μικρᾶς βασιλείας. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 264-268; ID., *How ‘Valentinian’ Was Heracleon’s Reading* (n. 73), pp. 224-228.

113. Heracleon, Quotation 35.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.49/323 (SC 222, 210): ἔδει γὰρ πρῶτον σπαρῆναι, εἴθ’ ὕστερον θερισθῆναι. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 250-252.

114. Heracleon, Quotation 36.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.50/336 (SC 222, 218): οὐ γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς κόπος σπειρόντων καὶ θερίζόντων· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐν κρύει καὶ ὕδατι καὶ κόπῳ τὴν γῆν σκάπτοντες σπείρουσιν καὶ δι’ ὄλου χειμῶνος τημελοῦσιν σκάλλοντες καὶ τὰς ὕλας ἐκλέγοντες· οἱ δὲ εἰς ἔτοιμον καρπὸν εἰσελθόντες θέρους εὐφραίνόμενοι θερίζουσιν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 252-254.

In this comment, Heracleon paints a sharp distinction between the prolonged labor of the sowers and the comparably easy and joyous task of the reapers. This expansion is clearly intended to elucidate Jesus' explanation in John 4,38 that he has sent his disciples to reap the fruit of others' labor – Jesus distinguishes between sowers and reapers, and Heracleon uses his knowledge of agriculture to explain what this means for the reapers.

3. *Attention to Narrative Characters (πρόσωπα)*

A prominent interest in Heracleon's *hypmnēmata* is the roles, actions, and motivations of various narrative characters¹¹⁵. Wucherpennig and Bastit both note Heracleon's apparent interest in specifying which character is speaking in John 1,18 and John 2,17¹¹⁶, but this is only the most basic instance of this theme in Heracleon's exegesis. When the Levites come to question John the Baptist, Heracleon investigates their motives¹¹⁷. When John remarks that he is unworthy to untie Jesus' sandals in John 1,27, Heracleon presents an explanatory paraphrase that appears to detail the Baptist's inferred opinions on the Incarnation: "I am not important enough that he on my account would descend from his majesty and take flesh as a sandal"¹¹⁸. In reference to the Samaritans exiting Sychar to meet Jesus in John 4,30, he remarks that they came by faith (διὰ τῆς πίστεως) to the Savior¹¹⁹, referencing the faith mentioned in John 4,39. In addition, he discusses the motivation of the narrative character of Jesus in John 4,1-5 by

115. Attention to narrative characters, and especially identification of which character is speaking in a given instance, was a standard practice of ancient literary critics. STEFANIW, *The School of Didymus* (n. 54), pp. 160-163, describes how this technique was used by Didymus the Blind in his Christian adaptation of standard literary-critical education. Cf. NÜNLIST, *The Ancient Critic at Work* (n. 79), pp. 238-256, who describes how this practice is visible in the *scholia*.

116. Summary 3.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.3/13 (SC 157, 138): εἰρῆσθαι οὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τοῦ μαθητοῦ, and Paraphrase 14.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 10.34/223 (SC 157, 514): Ἡρακλέων οἶεται τὸ «Ὁ ζῆλος τοῦ οἴκου σου καταφάγεται με» ἐκ προσώπου τῶν ἐχβληθέντων καὶ ἀναλωθέντων ὑπὸ τοῦ σωτῆρος δυνάμεων λέγεσθαι. Cf. WUCHERPENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 96-97; BASTIT, *Forme et méthode* (n. 58), p. 156; BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 127-130, 179-181.

117. Heracleon, Quotation 5.8 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.21/115 (SC 157, 214): ...λέγει τὸ "Ὅτι τούτοις προσῆκον ἦν περὶ τούτων πολυπραγμονεῖν καὶ πυνοθάνεσθαι, τοῖς τῷ θεῷ προσκαρτεροῦσιν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 144-146. This case is also noted by PERKINS, *Valentinians and the Christian Canon* (n. 2), p. 389.

118. Heracleon, Quotation 8.5 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.39/198 (SC 157, 278): Οὐκ εἶμι ἐγὼ ἰκανός, ἵνα δι' ἐμὲ κατέλθῃ ἀπὸ μεγέθους καὶ σάρκα λάβῃ ὡς ὑπόδημα. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 155-157.

119. Heracleon, Quotation 27.4 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.31/191 (SC 222, 136): καὶ ἤρχοντο διὰ τῆς πίστεως πρὸς τὸν σωτῆρα. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 227-230.

identifying the Samaritans as “the disciples on whose account he had come to Samaria”¹²⁰. When considering the Samaritan woman of John 4,1-42, Heracleon notices her realization that Jesus is a prophet, considers why she would be alone at the well outside of the town, and even discusses the cause of her sexual behavior:

After being persuaded that he was a prophet, she asked him, and revealed at the same time the cause for her sexual behavior, since she was ignorant of God and neglected both his worship and everything that was essential to her in life, and always found herself in unfortunate circumstances in life. ... For [otherwise] she would not have come to the well that was outside of the town¹²¹.

Heracleon notes that the woman’s question in John 4,20 depends on her identification of Jesus as a prophet in the preceding verse. He argues that her question also reveals that she hitherto has been ignorant of God and neglected to worship him, which has led her into unfortunate circumstances including her involvement with unfaithful men (John 4,18). The loneliness exhibited by her mid-day presence at the well outside of the town is due to this irregular sexual behavior, Heracleon infers.

These remarks on the behavior and motivations of narrative characters betray an advanced understanding of narrative characterization that goes beyond standard treatments¹²², and should be considered an important component in Heracleon’s literary-critical competence.

V. STAGE THREE: THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION

In a third stage of his exegetical procedure, Heracleon seems to have applied the text under analysis to a theological theme of potential interest to his audience¹²³. Two such themes are apparent from his interpretations:

120. Heracleon, Quotation 26.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.28/172 (SC 222, 128): ἤλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ πρὸς αὐτόν δι’ οὓς ἐηλύθει εἰς τὴν Σαμάρειαν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 225-227.

121. Heracleon, Quotations 19.4-5 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.15/92 (SC 222, 78-80): πεπεισμένην τέ αὐτὴν ὅτι προφήτης εἶη, ἐρωτᾶν αὐτόν ἅμα τὴν αἰτίαν ἐμφαίνουσαν δι’ ἣν ἐξεπύρνευσεν, ἅτε δι’ ἄγνοιαν θεοῦ καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὸν θεὸν λατρείας ἀμελήσασαν καὶ πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον αὐτῆ ἀναγκαίων, καὶ ἄλλως ἀεὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ τυγχάνουσαν. ... οὐ γὰρ ἄν, αὐτὴ ἤρχετο ἐπὶ τὸ φρέαρ ἐξω τῆς πόλεως τυγχάνον. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 201-204.

122. Most ancient *scholia* merely enumerate the characters and discuss whether they are historical or invented, although some note that a character can become known by their own words as well as by those of others. Cf. NÜNLIST, *The Ancient Critic at Work* (n. 79), pp. 238-256.

123. A similar interest in applying biblical passages in a way that unveil its implications for action in his readers’ lives may be traced in the exegesis of Clement of Alexandria, according

how God has interfered in world history to save humanity, and how individual people may be led toward conversion to a Christian faith. In modern terms they may be called the themes of *salvation history* (or *Heilsgeschichte*) and *evangelization*.

1. *Salvation History*

Heracleon's interest in the theology of salvation is apparent from his remark – presented by Origen as a comment on John 4,53 – that “The question is whether some of the angels, those who have descended to the daughters of humans, will be saved”¹²⁴. As Bastit notes¹²⁵, Heracleon must be referring to the angels who – according to Gen 6,2-4 – descended to human women and conceived giants, thereby spreading evil among humanity. They were an often-repeated motif in ancient reflections on the origin of evil¹²⁶, and Heracleon apparently wondered how far back in the chain of evil forgiveness and salvation could be expected. The association between John 4,53 – the report that the royal official and his whole household came to trust Jesus – and Gen 6,2-4 seems to be based on a notion that both angels and humans belong to God's household, and should be expected to believe in Jesus. Origen reports that Heracleon also referred to Matt 8,12 and Isa 1,2 in this context, presumably to argue that even “sons of the kingdom” (Matt 8,12) can face perdition if they reject God. These references suggest that Heracleon is concerned not only for antediluvian angelic beings, but also for his fellow humans.

Heracleon's salvific interest is also clear from Origen's response to his remarks on Jesus' statement that “you worship what you do not know, but we worship what we do know” in John 4,22. In the narratological context, Jesus' “we” refers to the Jews, and his “you” to the Samaritans, but Heracleon expands Jesus' dichotomy into a tripartite division between Gentiles, Jews, and Christians. We do not have Heracleon's own words on this point, but Origen accuses him of taking the words of the text beyond their literary

to A. LINDEMANN, *Eigentum und Reich Gottes*, in *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik* 50 (2014) 89-109, p. 104.

124. Heracleon, Quotation 40.20 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.60/425 (SC 222, 266): Ζητεῖσθαι δέ περὶ τινῶν ἀγγέλων εἰ σωθήσονται, τῶν κατελθόντων ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων θυγατέρας. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 277-279.

125. BASTIT, *Forme et méthode* (n. 58), p. 160.

126. Cf. Wis 14,6; Sir 16,7; Bar 3,26-28; 1 Enoch 6-8; *Jub.* 7,21-25; 2 Pet 2,4; Jude 1,6; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.2.14; Ephrem the Syrian, *Comm. Gen.* 6.3-6. Cf. also P. ASHWIN-SIEJKOWSKI, *Clement of Alexandria on Trial: The Evidence of “Heresy” from Photius' Bibliotheca* (SupplVigChr, 101), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2010, pp. 148-158.

context when he includes both Jews and Gentiles in a ὑμεῖς (plural “you”) that is originally addressed to a Samaritan woman¹²⁷. Origen also claims that Heracleon is using a non-canonical early Christian text, Πέτρου κήρυγμα (“The Preaching of Peter”), to argue that one should neither worship the divine by way of material objects as the Greeks do, nor emulate the misguided worship traditions of the Jews, who end up serving angels and moon gods rather than the true Creator¹²⁸. Taken together with Heracleon’s quoted exhortation that his readers should worship “neither the creation nor the Maker but the Father of Truth”¹²⁹, these responses indicate that Heracleon viewed both Gentiles and Jews as misguided, worshipping creation – or angelic servants involved in creation – instead of the Father¹³⁰. That he presented these views in the context of interpreting John 4,22 indicates his interest in teaching a Christian view on salvation.

Salvation history is also the backdrop of Heracleon’s comment on the Jewish Passover, when it is mentioned in John 2,13:

This is the great festival. It symbolized the passion of the Savior, when the lamb was not only slaughtered, but also offered recreation by being eaten: when it was sacrificed, it signified the Savior’s passion in this world; when it was eaten, it signified the recreation at the wedding banquet¹³¹.

Heracleon takes the Jewish Passover festival – or, more specifically, the Paschal lamb – as a symbolic precursor to the Christian salvation: the slaughtering of the lamb symbolizes Christ’s passion, and the eating of the lamb represents the wedding reception that Jesus recurrently uses as a symbol for the community in the kingdom of heaven¹³².

127. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.17/102-103 (SC 222, 84).

128. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.17/104 (SC 222, 86).

129. Heracleon, Quotation 20.5 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.16/97 (SC 222, 82): Ὑμεῖς οὖν, φησὶν (20.5), οἰόνει οἱ πνευματικοὶ οὔτε τῇ κτίσει οὔτε τῷ δημιουργῷ προσκυνήσετε, ἀλλὰ τῷ πατρὶ τῆς ἀληθείας. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 204-208.

130. Heracleon’s understanding of the δημιουργός (“Maker”) does not match the traditional “Gnostic” or “Valentinian” concepts of a misguided or evil creator god in opposition to the Father, but seems to refer to an angelic servant charged with the more mundane tasks in the process of creating the world. See BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 328-332.

131. Heracleon, Quotation 12.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 10.19/117 (SC 157, 452): Αὐτῇ ἡ μεγάλη ἑορτή· τοῦ γὰρ πάθους τοῦ σωτῆρος τύπος ἦν, ὅτε οὐ μόνον ἀνηρέϊτο τὸ πρόβατον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν παρεῖχεν ἐσθιόμενον, καὶ θυόμενον <μὲν> τὸ πάθος τοῦ σωτῆρος τὸ ἐν κόσμῳ ἐσήμαινε, ἐσθιόμενον δὲ τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν τὴν ἐν γάμῳ. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 170-171.

132. Cf. Matt 22,1-14; 25,1-13; Luke 12,36-38; 14,15-24; Rev 19,6-9.

The heavenly banquet recurs when Heracleon speculates that the δύο ἡμέρας (“two days”) for which Jesus remained among the Samaritans in Sychar may symbolize two eras of salvation history: the present age between the Resurrection and the Parousia, and the eternal heavenly celebration. He is, however, also open to the possibility that the two days symbolize the two modes in which Jesus is present among humans: his corporeal presence before the Crucifixion, and his post-resurrection presence among his believers, seemingly unbound by time and space¹³³:

“With them”, and not “in them”, he remained for “two days” – either the present age and the next one, which is at the wedding, or the period before his passion and that after his passion, when he departed from them after being “with them”, causing many more to turn to faith through his own words¹³⁴.

Heracleon’s second alternative is especially interesting, as it seems to draw out the parallels between Jesus’ presence in Sychar and his Incarnation: In both cases, there is a period of immediate access to Jesus as preacher, teacher, and healer, during which many come to faith, followed by a more demanding time afterwards, where Jesus’ presence is less obvious, and other preachers may be needed to proclaim the word. In both cases, Jesus’ presence is also preceded by a third period, when he is known only via the mediation of prophets – in the case of Sychar, the Samaritan woman’s testimony. These parallels betray Heracleon’s second main interest in the application of the Gospel of John, that of leading individual people to trust the Savior.

2. *Evangelization*

That Heracleon is interested in the salvific status of individual people is apparent from several of his observations. Concerning the water given by Christ in John 4,14, Heracleon stresses that the life given by Christ is eternal and imperishable for everyone that partakes of it – an emphasis that suggests that he intends for his reader not to miss the implied opportunity for the individual convert¹³⁵. In reference to John 4,21, he observes that

133. Cf. Matt 28,20; John 20,10-29.

134. Heracleon, Quotation 38.1 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.52/349 (SC 222, 226): «παρ’ αὐτοῖς» ἔμεινεν καὶ οὐκ «ἐν αὐτοῖς» καὶ δύο ἡμέρας, ἤτοι τὸν ἐνεστῶτα αἰῶνα καὶ τὸν μέλλοντα τὸν ἐν γάμῳ, ἢ τὸν πρὸ τοῦ πάθους αὐτοῦ χρόνον καὶ τὸν μετὰ τὸ πάθος, ὃν παρ’ αὐτοῖς ποιήσας πολλῶ πλείονας διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου λόγου ἐπιστρέψας εἰς πίστιν ἐχωρίσθη ἀπ’ αὐτῶν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen’s References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 256-259.

135. Heracleon, Quotation 17.5 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10/60 (SC 222, 62-64): αἰῶνιος γὰρ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ μηδέποτε φθειρομένη, ὡς καὶ ἡ πρώτη ἡ ἐκ τοῦ φρέατος, ἀλλὰ

Jesus' second-person plural προσκυνήσετε ("you will worship") already at this point includes the Samaritan woman among those who will worship in accordance with the truth – an observation that betrays his interest in leading people toward the right worship¹³⁶.

Three other comments on John 4 reveal that Heracleon has reflected, more specifically, on the process by which individual people may be led to trust in Jesus Christ. When the Samaritan woman, in John 4,28, leaves Jesus at the well to tell the news of his arrival to her fellow Samaritans, Heracleon remarks:

She returned to the world to announce to the called ones the good news of the arrival of the Christ, for it is through the spirit, and by the spirit, that the soul is brought to the Savior¹³⁷.

In this comment, Heracleon expresses the woman's intents in the form of Christian mission: to announce the gospel (εὐαγγελίζομαι) to the world (κόσμος) that the Christ has arrived. He also makes a general comment on how people come to believe in the Savior – their souls are brought to him by the spirit – that betrays that he has reflected on the process of conversion. The same reflection seems to be behind his comment on John 4,42, where the people of Sychar profess to the Samaritan woman that they no longer believe based on her testimony, but on their own interactions with Jesus. Heracleon states:

For people first come to trust the Savior after being guided by people, but when they encounter his words, they no longer believe solely based on human testimony, but also based on truth itself¹³⁸.

Here, Heracleon seems to make a parallel between the Samaritans, who first believe in Jesus based on the testimony of the Samaritan woman, but later based on their own interactions with him, and his own contemporaries,

μένουσα· ἀναφαίρετος γὰρ ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ δῶρεά τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν καὶ μὴ ἀναλίσκομένη μηδὲ φθειρομένη ἐν τῷ μετέχοντι αὐτῆς. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 189-191.

136. Heracleon, Quotation 20.6 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.16/97 (SC 222, 82): καὶ συμπαραλαμβάνει γε αὐτὴν ὡς ἤδη πιστὴν καὶ συναριθμουμένην τοῖς κατὰ ἀλήθειαν προσκυνηταῖς. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 204-208.

137. Heracleon, Quotation 27.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.31/187 (SC 222, 136): ὑπέστρεψεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον εὐαγγελιζομένη τῇ κλήσει τὴν Χριστοῦ παρουσίαν· διὰ γὰρ τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος προσάγεται ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σωτῆρι. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 227-230.

138. Heracleon, Quotation 39.2 in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.53/363 (SC 222, 234): οἱ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων ὀδηγούμενοι πιστεύουσιν τῷ σωτῆρι, ἐπὶ δὲ ἐντύχωσιν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ, οὗτοι οὐκέτι διὰ μόνην ἀνθρωπίνην μαρτυρίαν, ἀλλὰ δι' αὐτὴν τὴν ἀλήθειαν πιστεύουσιν. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 259-261.

who may be initially converted to a Christian faith by human mediation, but eventually believe based on their own encounters with the Christian tradition.

Heracleon's interest in evangelization and its intended end result, conversion, is even more apparent in his reflections on Jesus' metaphors on sowing and reaping in John 4,35-38. In reference to Jesus' request that the disciples lift their eyes to see that the fields are already white for harvest, Origen presents Heracleon's model of how the soul of an individual believer can develop from a seed into full bloom, ready to be harvested and gathered into a barn:

But I wonder why he [Heracleon] has understood this harvest to be a harvest of the souls of the believers, as he says that they are already in full bloom, ready for harvest, and suitable to be gathered into a barn – that is, into rest by means of faith – as many as are ready. But not all, for “some were already ready (ἔτοιμοι ἦσαν)”, he says, “but some were about to be (ἔμελλον), some are about to be (μέλλουσιν), and some are already sowers themselves (ἐπισπείρονται ἤδη)”¹³⁹.

Prompted by Jesus' metaphor of the fields being white for harvest, Heracleon reflects that an individual on the path toward a Christian faith may be likened to the maturing corn in a field¹⁴⁰. While some people already during the Savior's earthly ministry were in full bloom, ready for harvest, some were still approaching that stage by then, as some others are still, in Heracleon's own time, approaching the point of conversion. In the last category, the middle-passive ἐπισπείρονται can be understood as referring either to those who even now (ἤδη), in Heracleon's time, are being sown – that is, who are the object of Christian preaching – or to those who already (ἤδη) have proceeded from receivers of the gospel to sowers who plant the seeds in others. The latter alternative, which is reflected in the translation above, is consistent with the agricultural metaphor in that a fully developed tiller bears an ear filled with seeds that can be planted to produce the next crop.

139. Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.40/271 (SC 222, 176): Καὶ τὸν θερισμὸν δὲ οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξείληφεν τῶν πιστευόντων, λέγων βῆτι (Summary 32.2) “Ἡδὴ ἀκμαῖοι καὶ ἔτοιμοι εἰσιν πρὸς θερισμὸν καὶ ἐπιτήδευοι πρὸς τὸ συναχθῆναι εἰς ἀποθήκην, τοῦτ' ἔστιν διὰ πίστεως εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν, βῆσαι γὰρ ἔτοιμοι· οὐ γὰρ πᾶσαι· αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἤδη ἔτοιμοι ἦσαν, φησὶν, (Quotation 32.3) αἱ δὲ ἔμελλον, αἱ δὲ μέλλουσιν, αἱ δὲ ἐπισπείρονται ἤδη. Cf. BERGLUND, *Origen's References to Heracleon* (n. 7), pp. 238-245.

140. Heracleon's agricultural imagery may be inspired by 1 Cor 3,6-9 as well as by Matthew 13. As pointed out by WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus* (n. 6), pp. 164, 287, the imagery of humans as plants in a field is used by Plato (*Timaeus* 41a-43a), Paul (1 Cor 15,36-38.42-44), and the authors of the *Gospel of Truth* (41.3-13) and the *Tripartite Tractate* (62.6-15). I do not, however, agree with Wucherpfennig (pp. 166-167) that Heracleon's comment refers to the creation, rather than conversion, of individual humans.

Heracleon's practice of using various details of John 4 to discuss the salvific status of different people, and the process by which individuals may approach a conversion to the Christian faith, betrays an interest in salvation theology and evangelization, and suggests that his *hypomnēmata* is aimed at an audience engaged in spreading the Christian faith to outsiders. This interest appears to be of significant importance for his exegetical practice.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has aimed to provide a new overall assessment of Heracleon's exegetical methodology, based not on the traditional presupposition that Heracleon is interpreting the Fourth Gospel with a predetermined "Valentinian" theology in mind, but on those of Origen's references to Heracleon that – in view of Origen's quotation practices in other contexts – can be deemed the most accurate, un-adapted, and trustworthy.

The analysis has discerned three distinct stages in Heracleon's exegetical procedure. In the first stage, Heracleon paraphrases the Johannine passage under consideration to accentuate the features he finds to be most interesting. As the points Heracleon draws out can readily be inferred from the text under consideration or from its immediate literary context, the focus of this process appears not to be to find support for any particular systematic theology, but simply to discern the meaning of the text at hand.

In the second stage, Heracleon makes a detailed analysis of the text, using various ancient literary-critical methods. Prominent among these are *γλωσσηματικόν* ("word studies"), which aims at discerning what a given word might mean in a particular literary context, and *ιστορικόν* ("analysis of what is reported in the text"), whereby various details of the text are discussed in view of its references to historical events, factual data, and natural phenomena. Heracleon also pays attention to narrative characters (*πρόσωπα*) in the text, not only to identify the current speaker, but also to discuss the characters' backgrounds, emotions, and motivations.

In a third stage of his exegesis, Heracleon applies the text under study to a theological theme of relevance for his audience. The limited material at our disposal does not permit us to outline the boundaries for which themes he might have found relevant, but two such themes are apparent from the extant material: theological reflection on Christian salvation, and the process by which individual people may be led toward a conversion to a Christian faith. The choice of these two themes suggests that Heracleon finds himself in a community of believers who are actively seeking to spread their faith to

outsiders, and therefore are interested in salvation theology and the process of conversion.

Heracleon's exegetical procedure appears to be well informed by the established methodology of ancient literary criticism, attentive to grammatical, contextual, and theological details within the narrative, and aimed toward an elucidative, coherent, and applicable interpretation of the Gospel of John. His position as the earliest known author of a commentary to a writing in the emerging New Testament should therefore not be regarded as an accident of history, but as a well-earned accomplishment by a proficient ancient literary critic, brave enough to apply his skills in the analysis of a Christian gospel.

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ORIGENES ALS INTERPRET DES NEUEN TESTAMENTS

AUSLEGUNGSGESCHICHTLICHE PERSPEKTIVEN UND HERMENEUTISCHE ANSÄTZE ANHAND DER NEUEN *PSALMENHOMILIEN*

I. ZUR EINLEITUNG:

EINIGE *DESIDERATA* ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT BEI ORIGENES

Wenn ich die Erwartungen der Veranstalter richtig verstanden habe, soll ich einen Beitrag zum „exegetischen Vorgehen“ des Origenes am Neuen Testament liefern. Ich meine damit nicht nur die hermeneutischen Prinzipien und die Auslegungsmethoden, mit denen der Alexandriner neutestamentliche Texte behandelt, sondern auch die Art und Weise, wie er jene Prinzipien und Methoden anwendet und unmittelbar mit dem Text umgeht. Worin bestehen zum Beispiel die besonderen Schwierigkeiten und Probleme, mit denen Origenes im Neuen Testament, im Unterschied zum Alten – und zwar angefangen mit der von ihm benutzten Textvorlage – zu tun hat? In welchem auslegungsgeschichtlichen bzw. exegetisch-theologischen Zusammenhang sieht er dann seine diesbezügliche Auslegung und welche sind die Schwerpunkte und die eigenen Akzente, die sie charakterisieren? Welche neutestamentlichen Zitate spielen darüber hinaus bei ihm eine wichtige Rolle, so dass sie immer wieder vorkommen und sozusagen die Koordinaten für seine Interpretation bilden?

Diese Fragen ließen sich ohne weiteres vermehren, nur um zu betonen, wie weit ich davon entfernt bin, auch nur einige dieser an sich verständlichen und zweckmäßigen *Desiderata* zu befriedigen. Meine erste Feststellung zum Thema – so paradox dies klingen mag – besteht insofern darin, dass ich auf ein Manko der Forschung hinweisen muss, unter dem auch mein heutiger Beitrag leidet: Trotz der unermesslichen Flut von Publikationen über Origenes seit dem Beginn des 20. Jhs finden wir kaum eine Monographie, die sich mit der neutestamentlichen Auslegung des Origenes

im Allgemeinen befasst¹. Übrigens gilt dies laut Domenico Pazzini, einem seiner scharfsinnigsten Kenner, der sich zuerst nur an den Prolog gewagt hat, bis er schließlich vor kurzem ein Buch zur Christologie des Johannes-Kommentars veröffentlicht hat², ganz besonders für ihr wichtigstes Zeugnis, den *Johanneskommentar*. Ich will natürlich nicht behaupten, dass es an Arbeiten zu diesem oder jenem Thema der Exegese bzw. der Theologie des Neuen Testaments bei Origenes mangelt. Davon haben wir vielleicht sogar *ad abundantiam*! Vor allem aber besitzen wir manche klassische Werke zur biblischen Interpretation des Origenes, wie die von Henri de Lubac, Marguerite Harl, Richard Hanson und anderen, die es sich lohnt, auch heutzutage zu lesen³. Aber es fehlt immer noch eine übergreifende Untersuchung, die sich mit dem gesamten Spektrum der oben genannten Fragen systematisch befasst. Doch auch einzelne Aspekte und Bereiche werden weitgehend vernachlässigt. So ist beispielsweise die Arbeit zum neutestamentlichen Text des Origenes nach einigen verdienstvollen Untersuchungen im vorigen Jahrhundert praktisch zum Stillstand gekommen⁴. Auch der Kommentierung einzelner Schriften des Neuen Testaments seitens des Alexandriners wird generell, abgesehen von den Studien über die drei großen neutestamentlichen Kommentare zum *Matthäus-* und *Johannesevangelium* oder zum *Römerbrief*, in der gegenwärtigen Forschung wenig Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt⁵; dies beweist neuerdings auch das Fehlen von Reaktionen auf die fragwürdigen

1. Dies gilt auch für die Origenes-Lexica: so findet man, z.B., in J.A. MCGUCKIN (Hg.), *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, Louisville, KY – London, Westminster John Knox, 2004, einen Artikel zum Alten Testament, aber keinen zum Neuen.

2. D. PAZZINI, *Gesù il Cristo in Origene: Il Commento a Giovanni*, Brescia, Paideia, 2017. Vgl. auch sein früheres Buch: *In principio era il Logos: Origene e il prologo del vangelo di Giovanni*, Brescia, Paideia, 1983. Für die oben angedeutete Einschätzung der Forschungslage, s. ID., *Giovanni Ev. (scritti esegetici su)*, in A. MONACI CASTAGNO (Hg.), *Origene. Dizionario: La cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, Roma, Città Nuova, 2000, 197. Seitdem hat sich jedoch die Lage zum Teil verändert – und zwar durch den von E. PRINZIVALLI herausgegebenen Aktenband *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene* (s. unten Anm. 24).

3. Vgl. H. DE LUBAC, *Histoire et Esprit: L'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène*, Paris, Aubier, 1950 (Neudr. 2002); M. HARL, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné*, Paris, Seuil, 1948 (Neudr. 2019); R. HANSON, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, London, SCM, 1959.

4. Vgl. vor allem D.D. HANNAH, *The Text of I Corinthians in the Writings of Origen*, Atlanta, GA, Scholars, 1997 (der Verf. bietet einen kurzen bibliographischen Rückblick auf Seiten 1-2 an). Unter den neueren Arbeiten ist C. ZAMAGNI, *Recherches sur le Nouveau Testament et les apocryphes chrétiens*, Rimini, GuaraldiLAB, 2017 (S. 91-112: „5. Le texte des épîtres de Jean d'après Origène“) zu erwähnen. Wie Origenes für die Textüberlieferung des Neuen Testaments bedeutsam sein kann, zeigt neuerdings u.a. S.N. HELTON, *Origen and the Endings of the Gospel of Mark*, in *Conversations with the Biblical World* 36 (2016) 103-125.

5. So hat sich keiner erneut daran gemacht, die Paulus-Exegese des Origenes im Ganzen zu untersuchen, nach dem verdienstvollen Entwurf von F. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene: Contributo alla storia della recezione delle epistole paoline nel III secolo*, Roma, Studium, 1992.

Thesen von Panayotis Tzamalikos betreffs der *Scholien zur Apokalypse*⁶. Vor allem wäre es längst an der Zeit, an eine *Biblia Origeniana* zu denken, die uns anhand der Zitate aus dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament einen tieferen und meiner Meinung nach äußerst gewinnbringenden Einblick in die Gedankenwelt des Alexandriners erlauben würde. Vor sechzig Jahren hat Marguerite Harl schon darauf hingewiesen, wie wichtig es wäre, sich mit den Schriftstellen des Origenes und seiner Zitierstrategie chronologisch und inhaltlich ausführlicher auseinanderzusetzen, wobei sie sich zum Vergleich auf ein entsprechendes Werkzeug wie die *Biblia Augustiniana* von Anne-Marie La Bonnardière bezog⁷.

In Anbetracht dieser Forschungslage kann ich hier nur versuchen, Origenes als Interpreten des Neuen Testaments ansatzweise darzustellen. Deshalb werde ich mich zuerst bemühen, einige Vorüberlegungen zum geschichtlichen Standort seiner Auslegung des Neuen Testaments anzustellen, bevor ich mich eingehender mit ihren hermeneutischen und exegetischen Aspekten beschäftige. Statt dafür das immerhin noch sehr beträchtliche *corpus* der Werke des Alexandriners zu ergründen, welche die neutestamentlichen Schriften im Einzelnen (wenn auch alle mehr oder weniger fragmentarisch) interpretieren, werde ich die Behandlung des Neuen Testaments in den von Marina Molin Pradel 2012 entdeckten *Psalmehomilien* des Münchner *Codex Graecus* 314 analysieren. Unter den alttestamentlichen Büchern genießt bekanntlich gerade der Psalter einen privilegierten Platz im Neuen Testament, und ganz besonders in den Evangelien⁸. Darüber hinaus ist der Psalter unter den alttestamentlichen Schriften für die patristische Auslegung das Buch Christi und der Kirche an sich⁹, so dass ich vielleicht meine Wahl

6. P. TZAMALIKOS, *An Ancient Commentary on the Book of Revelation: A Critical Edition of the Scholia in Apocalypsin*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Für eine kritische Würdigung der vorgeschlagenen Identifizierung des Autors mit einem angeblichen Cassianus Sabaites, s. R. ALCIATI, *Il Cassiano greco di Panayotis Tzamalikos*, in *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* 11 (2014) 451-478, der sich allerdings nur am Rande mit den Scholien befasst.

7. HARL, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné* (Anm. 3), S. 349 Anm. 42. Ab 1960 sind sieben Folgen der *Biblia Augustiniana* erschienen, wobei nur eine einigen neutestamentlichen Büchern gewidmet wurde: 1. und 2. Th, Tit und Phlm (Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1964).

8. Vgl. u.a. M. SIMONETTI, *I "salmi" nel Nuovo Testamento*, in *Orpheus* 9 (1988) 1-20; H.W. ATTRIDGE, *Giving Voice to Jesus: Use of the Psalms in the New Testament*, in ID. – M.E. FASSLER (eds.), *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical and Artistic Traditions* (SBL Symposium Series, 25), Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, 101-112; C. ZAMAGNI, *Sui Salmi nel Nuovo Testamento*, in ID., *Recherches sur le Nouveau Testament et les apocryphes chrétiens* (Anm. 4), 15-26.

9. Vgl. H. DE LUBAC, *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme*, Paris, Cerf, 1947⁴, S. 158-159: „Dans les Psaumes, c'est constamment le Christ qui parle, et constamment aussi c'est de nous qu'il parle, c'est par nous, et en nous, de même que nous parlons en lui... D'une

in dieser Hinsicht nicht weiter rechtfertigen muss. Außerdem hoffe ich dadurch noch einmal zeigen zu können, wie hilfreich es sein kann, die Auslegung eines biblischen Buches durch Origenes auch anhand seiner Zitate zu rekonstruieren, wie ich es vor kurzem für seinen Gebrauch der Genesis in den *Psalmenhomilien* getan habe¹⁰.

II. DER GESCHICHTLICHE STANDORT DES ORIGENES ALS INTERPRET DES NEUEN TESTAMENTS

Versucht man nun den Standort des Origenes in der Geschichte der patristischen Auslegung zu umschreiben, wird man sofort mit seiner Einzigartigkeit als Interpret des Neuen Testaments konfrontiert. Sie ergibt sich in ihrer ganzen Tragweite nicht nur wegen des immer noch imposanten Ausmaßes seiner überlieferten Kommentare zu den Evangelien und dem Römerbrief (ohne andererseits die Exzerpta zu weiteren Paulusbriefen sowie die *Lukas-homilien* und dazu auch noch die verloren gegangenen Schriften zu vergessen)¹¹, sondern in erster Linie durch die Tatsache seiner Pionierarbeit. Manlio Simonetti hat speziell mit Bezug auf die Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments zu Recht bemerkt, wie der Alexandriner auslegungsgeschichtlich

phrase à l'autre, et jusque dans la même phrase, en une sorte d'entrelacement perpétuel, tantôt le Christ s'exprime en son nom seul, comme Sauveur, né de la Vierge, tantôt il s'identifie à ses membres, et c'est alors la sainte Église qui entre en scène, bien que ce soit toujours en ce double rôle le même ‚je‘ qui s'exprime¹². Zur patristischen Auslegung des Psalters vgl. zuletzt B.E. DALEY, *Finding the Right Key: The Aims and Strategies of Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, in ID. – P.R. KOLBET (Hgg.), *The Harp of the Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 20), Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2015, 11-28.

10. *La presenza della Genesi nelle Omelie sui Salmi di Origene*, in *Adamantius* 23 (2017) 147-166.

11. Für einen kritischen Überblick der in *Ep.* 33 des Hieronymus aufgelisteten Kommentare und Homilien zum Neuen Testament, vgl. P. NAUTIN, *Origène: Sa vie et son œuvre*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1977, S. 242-246 und 253-254. Nach diesem Katalog soll der Alexandriner außer *CMt*, *CIo* und *CRm* auch *excerpta* zu einzelnen Stellen des *Johannesevangeliums* (*In partes quasdam Iohannis excerptorum liber unus*), einen *Lukaskommentar* (*In Lucam libri V*) und weitere Kommentare zu etlichen Paulusbriefen (*In epistulam ad Galatas libri V*; *In epistulam ad Ephesios libri III*; *In epistulam ad Philippenses liber unus*; *In epistulam ad Colossenses libri III*, *In epistulam ad Thessalonicenses primam libri III*; *In epistulam ad Thessalonicenses alteram liber unus*; *In epistulam ad Titum liber unus*; *In epistulam ad Philemonem liber unus*) verfasst haben. Betreffs des homiletischen Werks neben *HLC* werden noch Predigten zu den folgenden Büchern erwähnt: *Matthäusevangelium* (*In Matthaëum homiliae XXV*), *Apostelgeschichte* (*In Actus Apostolorum homiliae XVII*), *1. u. 2 Korintherbrief* (mit ausdrücklicher Angabe nur für den zweiten Brief: *In epistulam secundam ad Corinthios homiliae XI*), *Galaterbrief* (*In epistulam ad Galatas homiliae VII*), den *Thessalonicherbriefen* (*In epistulam ad Thessalonicenses ... homiliae II*), *Titusbrief* (*In epistulam ad Titum homilia una*) und *Hebräerbrief* (*In epistulam ad Hebraeos homiliae XVII*).

im Grunde isoliert dasteht, da vor ihm noch keine Regeln für seine Interpretation vorhanden waren¹². Außerdem wird dieser Eindruck weiter bekräftigt, wenn man auch seine Anwendung philologischer Methoden bei der exegetischen Arbeit berücksichtigt. Solche Techniken waren seinen bedeutendsten kirchlichen Vorgängern wie Irenäus oder Hippolyt (wohl aber nicht Herakleon¹³) unbekannt und nur sehr wenige unter den nachfolgenden Kirchenvätern haben sie mit dem Alexandriner geteilt¹⁴.

Im Allgemeinen lässt sich, abgesehen von den meist impliziten Quellen-Hinweisen (mit nur wenigen Ausnahmen, wie im Falle des Philon von Alexandria)¹⁵ und den exegetischen „Überlieferungen“ (παράδοσεις), die er gelegentlich erwähnt¹⁶, die Bindung des Origenes an die frühere Auslegungsgeschichte nicht klar definieren. Übrigens gelten sowohl die einen als auch die anderen wesentlich der alttestamentlichen Exegese¹⁷. Dementsprechend ist der Versuch weitgehend aussichtslos, die geschichtlichen Umstände und die genaueren Voraussetzungen ans Licht zu bringen, die hinter seinem Werk als Interpret der Bibel stecken mögen. Dies trifft in meinen Augen auch für den brillanten Versuch von Marco Rizzi zu, der interessanterweise, aber nichtsdestoweniger problematisch eine doppelte Phase in der Exegese des Origenes annimmt: Die erste sei vom Literalismus seiner philologischen Ausbildung bestimmt worden, die zweite dagegen vom philosophisch geprägten Allegorismus, zu dem sich der Alexandriner nach der Begegnung mit Ammonios Sakkas „bekehrt“ haben soll, ohne allerdings die philologische Methode aufzugeben. Insofern besteht auch für Rizzi die Eigenart des

12. M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o allegoria: Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 23), Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1985, S. 93: „per il Nuovo Testamento è mancata, prima di Origene, anche un'embrionale normativa esegetica“.

13. Hierzu vgl. den Beitrag von C.J. BERGLUND im vorliegenden Band.

14. Zum philologischen Ansatz als Merkmal der origenischen Exegese, s. M. SIMONETTI, *Scrittura sacra*, in MONACI CASTAGNO (Hg.), *Origene. Dizionario* (Anm. 2), 424-437, S. 428.

15. Auch die neuen *Psalmhomilien* belegen seine Bezugnahme auf Philon, wie ich es feststellen konnte: *Doctrinal Traditions and Cultural Heritage in the Newly Discovered Homilies of Origen on the Psalms* (Cod. Mon. Graec. 314), in *Phasis* 18 (2015) 191-212, S. 195-199. Vgl. außerdem M.B. COVER, *A New Fragment of Philo's Quaestiones in Exodum in Origen's Newly Discovered Homilies on the Psalms? A Preliminary Note*, in *Studia Philonica Annual* 30 (2018) 15-29.

16. Paradoxerweise lässt sich als exegetischer Mentor bzw. Meister des Origenes nur der „jüdisch-christliche“ Lehrer bezeichnen, den er meistens „den Hebräer“ (ὁ Ἑβραῖος) nennt. Dessen besondere Bedeutung hat NAUTIN, *Origène: Sa vie et son œuvre* (Anm. 11), S. 417 zu Recht betont. Vgl. neuerdings G. DORIVAL – R. NAIWELD, *Les interlocuteurs hébreux et juifs d'Origène à Alexandrie et à Césarée*, in O. ANDREI (Hg.), *Caesarea Maritima e la scuola origeniana: Multiculturalità, forme di competizione culturale e identità cristiana*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2013, 121-138.

17. Vgl. *ibid.*, S. 121-126.

Origenes, die ihn zudem von seinen alexandrinischen Vorgängern (Klemens!) unterscheidet, in der Verbindung zwischen „Buchstaben“ und „Allegorie“¹⁸.

Wie zu erwarten, ist die besondere Stellung des exegetischen Beitrags des Origenes zum Neuen Testament mit dem Prozess in Verbindung gebracht worden, der zur Entstehung des neutestamentlichen Kanons innerhalb der christlichen Bibel geführt hat¹⁹. In der Tat war dieser im Großen und Ganzen für den Alexandriner abgeschlossen, auch wenn am Anfang des 3. Jhs einige Unsicherheit betreffs einzelner Bücher wie dem Hebräerbrief oder der Apokalypse und anderen Schriften bestand, die noch eine Weile dauern sollte²⁰. Doch empfiehlt es sich, mit Martin Wallraff die exegetische Leistung des Origenes nicht so sehr im Blick auf den Abschluss des neutestamentlichen Kanons zu sehen, sondern sie als einen entscheidenden Schritt zur Auffassung des Neuen Testaments als (zweiter) inspirierter Schrift neben dem Alten Testament zu verstehen²¹. Dies impliziert wiederum für den Alexandriner, die aus beiden Testamenten bestehende Bibel der Kirche in ihrer inneren Gliederung mit den verschiedenen Hauptteilen zu betrachten, wie wir es anhand der *Psalmenhomilien* bald beobachten werden. Denn gerade darin vereinigen sich bei ihm die beiden Perspektiven des Kanons und der Schriftinspiration.

Mehr noch als im Blick auf die Bildung des Kanons an sich dürften wir die Arbeit am Neuen Testament in ihrem geschichtlichen Zusammenhang besser verstehen, wenn wir das polemische Anliegen erwägen, das sie begleitet

18. M. RIZZI, *Cultural and Religious Exchanges in Alexandria: The Transformation of Philosophy and Exegesis in the 3rd Cent. in the Mirror of Origen*, in L. ARCARI (Hg.), *Beyond Conflicts. Cultural and Religious Cohabitations in Alexandria and Egypt between the 1st and the 6th Century CE* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum / Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity, 103), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2017, 399-413.

19. Vgl. z.B. B. LANG, *Die Bibelkommentare der Kirchenväter (ca. 200-600): Kleines Kompendium mit Forschungsstand und Beispieltexen*, in D. KÄSTLE – N. JANSEN (Hgg.), *Kommentare in Recht und Religion*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2014, 57-97, S. 59: „Um 200 ist die verbindlich geltende Sammlung der neutestamentlichen Schriften – trotz Unschärfen an den Rändern – abgeschlossen; zusammen mit dem vom Judentum vorgegebenen Alten Testament gibt es seitdem eine aus den zwei Testamenten bestehende ‚Bibel‘. Die einzelnen biblischen Schriften werden fortan *kommentiert*. Nun gilt: Theologie ist Bibelauslegung. Sie ist existenzielle Textforschung, die sich des Kommentars als literarischer Form bedient“.

20. E. NORELLI, *Canone*, in MONACI CASTAGNO (Hg.), *Origene. Dizionario* (Anm. 2), 53-60 fasst die wesentlichen Informationen zusammen (besonders, zum „Verzeichnis“ der neutestamentlichen Schriften in *HIos* VII,1 s. *ibid.*, S. 57-58).

21. M. WALLRAFF, *Il rapporto tra Antico e Nuovo Testamento nella teoria esegetica di Origene*, in L. PERRONE (Hg.), *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition* (BETL, 164), Leuven, Leuven University Press – Peeters, 2003, 779-787, S. 786: „Egli si trova di fatto al termine di tale processo in rapporto alla questione di quale scritto rientri nel canone o meno, e al tempo stesso rappresenta lo stadio iniziale riguardo alla ‚trasformazione in Scrittura‘ del Nuovo Testamento“.

und bedingt. Wie bekannt, verfasst Origenes sein erstes neutestamentliches Werk, den in Alexandria begonnenen und in Cäsarea fortgesetzten *Johanneskommentar*, auch als Antwort auf die „Kommentare“ (*Hypomnēmata*) des valentinianischen Gnostikers Herakleon²². Deren Bedeutung für das Werk des Alexandriner sollte allerdings nicht überschätzt werden, ohne damit seine antignostischen Sorgen sowie eine gewisse methodische Verwandtschaft mit dem Gegner leugnen zu wollen²³: Am literarischen Profil des origeneischen Kommentars lässt sich nämlich zeigen, dass Origenes' Replik auf die Exegese Herakleons nicht strukturell und systematisch auftritt (wie es dagegen mit dem *Alethes Logos* des Kelsos in *Contra Celsum* geschieht), sondern nur teilweise eine Rolle für ihn spielt²⁴. Als er jedoch begann, das 4. Evangelium auszulegen, hatte der Alexandriner auch andere polemische Ziele im Visier, die sich im zeitgenössischen *Peri archôn* in ihrer Breite offenbaren und auch danach seine Haltung wie eine Konstante prägen. Diese Polemik, in der repräsentativen Trias von Valentinus, Basilides und Markion als gemeinsame Zielscheibe zusammengefasst, wiederholt sich praktisch bis hin zu den *Psalmenhomilien*, die wohl der allerletzten Periode im literarischen Schaffen des Origenes angehören²⁵. Es lässt sich wohl kaum bestreiten, dass unter den drei genannten Häresiarchen die Hauptrolle (vom exegetischen Blickpunkt aus gesehen, und gerade, was das Neue Testament betrifft) Markion gebührt, obgleich der Alexandriner auch die Kritik an Valentinus und Basilides weitgehend mit exegetischen Argumenten übt²⁶. Aber Origenes hat vor allem Markion im Sinne, wenn er die Einheit der

22. Vgl. A. WUCHERPFENNIG, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT, 142), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2002 und M. SIMONETTI, *Un recente libro su Eracleone*, in *Adamantius* 9 (2003) 193-208.

23. Nach C. MARKSCHIES, *Origenes und die Kommentierung des paulinischen Römerbriefs*, in ID., *Origenes und sein Erbe: Gesammelte Studien*, Berlin –New York, De Gruyter, 2007, 63-89, S. 74: „Heracleon ging es in seinem ‚Kommentar‘ zum Johannesevangelium wohl darum, durch eine gelehrten Maßstäben genügende Erklärung Anstöße zu beseitigen, die die biblischen Texte für gebildete Lesen bereit hielten. Allegorie und Philologie nahm er als zwei bewährte Methoden zu diesem Zweck in Anspruch“.

24. L. PERRONE, *Il profilo letterario del Commento a Giovanni: operazione esegetica e costruzione del testo*, in E. PRINZIVALLI (Hg.), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene: Il testo e i suoi contesti. Atti dell'VIII Convegno di Studi del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina* (Biblioteca di Adamantius, 3), Villa Verucchio, Pazzini, 2005, 43-81, S. 54-59.

25. A. LE BOULLUEC, *La polémique contre les hérésies dans les Homélie sur les Psaumes d'Origène* (Codex Monacensis Graecus 314), in *Adamantius* 20 (2014) 256-274; L. PERRONE, *The Dating of the New Homilies on the Psalms in the Munich Codex: The Ultimate Origen?*, in *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 67 (2017) 243-251.

26. Nicht von ungefähr führt CC II,27 (156.5-6 KOETSCHAU) die Markioniten vor den Valentinianern ein und zwar als diejenigen, die die Evangelien manipulieren: Μεταχράσαντας δὲ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἄλλους οὐκ οἶδα ἢ τοὺς ἀπὸ Μαρκίωνος καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ Οὐαλεντίνου.

Heiligen Schrift aus dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament verteidigt. Außerdem lehnt er die Eingriffe in den Text des Neuen Testaments ab, die er dem Markion vorwirft.

So sehr sich das Anliegen des Origenes für einen gesicherten Text der Schrift in erster Linie beim Alten Testament mit seinem großartigen Unternehmen der *Hexapla* erweist, gleichwohl wird von ihm die philologische Methode auch beim Neuen Testament, vor allem bei den Evangelien, in Anspruch genommen. Auch die *Psalmenhomilien* bestätigen dies, indem sie die Widerlegung des Markion noch weiter als im *Johanneskommentar* vorantreiben²⁷. So kritisiert Origenes in der *1. Homilie zu Psalm 77* eine Interpolation, die vor das Zitat von Ps 77,2a in Mt 13,35 in seine Vorlage des Matthäusevangeliums geraten war: „Damit sollte sich erfüllen, was durch den Propheten Jesaja gesagt worden ist“. Nach dem Alexandriner musste ein unwissender Kopist irrtümlicherweise den selteneren Namen Asafs durch den des geläufigeren Propheten Jesaja ersetzt haben²⁸. Diese Bemerkung bringt dann den Prediger dazu, sich über die vielfältigen Einfälle und Attacken des Teufels gegen die Kirche auszulassen, die nicht einmal den Text der Schrift schonten, um dadurch ihre angebliche „Unstimmigkeit“ (*διαφωνία*) hervorzurufen. Diese Gefahr solle trotzdem nicht zu übereilten „Korrekturen“ (*διόρθωσις*) ermutigen, wie es Markion getan hat.

Ἐπιβουλεύει τοίνυν καὶ ταῖς γραφαῖς ὁ διάβολος, ἀλλὰ οὐ διὰ τοῦτο ἡμᾶς χρὴ τολμᾶν καὶ προπετῶς ἕκειν ἐπὶ τὴν διόρθωσιν. Τοιοῦτον γάρ τι παθὼν καὶ ὁ Μαρκίων καὶ ὑπολαβὼν ἡμαρτήσθαι τὰς γραφὰς καὶ τοῦ διαβόλου γεγονέναι παρεγγραφάς, ἐπέτρεψεν ἑαυτῷ διορθοῦν τὴν γραφήν. Καὶ ἐπιτρέψας, ἤρεν ἐκ βάθρων τὰ ἀναγκαῖα τῶν εὐαγγελίων,

Der Teufel attackiert also auch die Schriften; aber deswegen müssen wir nicht übermütig werden und übereilt Korrekturen vornehmen. Auch Markion hat etwas Derartiges erfahren. Da er annahm, dass sich die Schriften irren und der Teufel sie interpoliert hat, erlaubte er sich, die Schrift zu korrigieren. Indem er sich (dies) erlaubte, beseitigte er von Grund

Andererseits erscheint Basilides nach *HLC* I,2 (RAUER 5) als Verfasser eines Evangeliums: *Ausus fuit et Basilides scribere euangelium et suo illud nomine titolare.*

27. Zur Textkritik in den *Psalmenhomilien*, vgl. A. CACCIARI, *Nuova luce sull'officina origeniana: I LXX e 'gli altri'*, in *Adamantius* 20 (2014) 217-225; L. PERRONE, *The Find of the Munich Codex: A Collection of 29 Homilies on the Psalms*, in A.-C. JACOBSEN (Hg.), *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (BETL, 274), Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT, Peeters, 2016, 201-233, S. 209-220.

28. *H77Ps* I,1 (GCS.OW XIII, 351.10-17): Παραφράσαντος τὸ ῥητὸν τοιαύταις λέξεσιν οὕτως ἐνθάδε εἰρημένον τοῦ Ματθαίου, γέγονε δὲ περὶ τὰ ἀντίγραφα τοῦ εὐαγγελίου σφάλμα γραφικόν· ἵνα γάρ, φησί, πληρωθῆ τὸ εἰρημένον ἐπὶ Ἡσαίου· “ἀνοίξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου” (Mt 13,35; Ps 77,2a). Εἰκόσ γάρ ἐνα τινὰ τῶν ἀρχῆθεν γραφόντων μὴ ἐπιστήσαντα μὲν ὅτι ἐστὶν ὁ Ἀσάφ προφήτης, εὐρόντα δὲ τὸ ἵνα πληρωθῆ τὸ εἰρημένον ἐπὶ Ἀσάφ, ὑπειληφέναι ὅτι ἁμαρτημά ἐστι καὶ τετολμηκέναι διὰ τὸν ξηνισμόν τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ προφήτου ποιῆσαι ἀντὶ τοῦ Ἀσάφ Ἡσαίου.

τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ σωτῆρος, καὶ ἄλλα
 μυρία, καὶ ὀπτασίας καὶ προφητείας καὶ
 τὰ ἀναγκαῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου²⁹.

auf das Notwendige an den Evangelien
 – die Geburt des Erlösers und zahlreiche
 andere Dinge, die Visionen und die Pro-
 phezeiungen – sowie das Notwendige
 am Apostel.

Origenes beschränkt sich hier nicht darauf, Markion für seine Tilgung der Weihnachtsgeschichte im Lukasevangelium mit der Gottesgeburt Jesu aus Maria zu tadeln, wie er es auch im *Johanneskommentar* getan hatte³⁰. Er scheint zusätzlich auf andere Aspekte der Evangelien-Kritik Markions – und zwar betreffs von Visionen und Prophezeiungen – hindeuten zu wollen, während er einen ähnlichen Vorwurf der Manipulation hinsichtlich des *Corpus Paulinum* hinzufügt³¹. Unter beiden Aspekten würde nach Origenes der Häresiarch von Pontus sowohl die Botschaft von Jesus als auch die von Paulus kompromittieren³². Der Konflikt erstreckte sich für ihn übrigens auch auf die Methode der Interpretation, da Markion sich gegen die Allegorie ausgesprochen hatte, wie wir aus der Auslegung von Mt 19,12 im *Matthäuskommentar* entnehmen: Statt diese Stelle den Prinzipien Markions gemäß Jesus abzuspochen, sollte sie, wie der Alexandriner erklärt, eher allegorisch verstanden werden³³. Damit kehren wir auf den Punkt zurück, auf den ich vorhin verwiesen habe, als die Rede von der Einzigartigkeit des Origenes war. Diese bestand auch darin, dass die für ihn typische Interpretation der Bibel mittels der geistigen bzw. allegorischen Erklärung auch am Neuen Testament Anwendung fand. Wir kommen also nach dieser skizzenhaften Erörterung des auslegungsgeschichtlichen Standorts des Alexandriner auf seine hermeneutischen Prinzipien zu sprechen.

29. *Ibid.* (352.14-19). Auch *H77Ps IX,5* (473.21-24) wirft den Markioniten die Ablehnung der Genealogie Jesu vor: Πυλθάνου οὖν Μαρκιωνιστῶν: “ἄρα ἐστίν σοι μερίς ἐν Δαβὶδ καὶ κληρονομία ἐν νῶ Ἰεσσαί”; Ἀποκρίνεται: “οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν μερίς ἐν Δαβὶδ οὐδὲ κληρονομία ἐν νῶ Ἰεσσαί”. Ἡρῆσαντο γὰρ τὸν γενόμενον ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ κατὰ σάρκα (Röm 1,3).

30. *Clo X,6,24* (176.8-12 PREUSCHEN): Ἐγὼ δ’ οἶμαι καὶ τὸν Μαρκίωνα παρεκδεξάμενον ὑγιεῖς λόγους, ἀθετοῦντα αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐκ Μαρίας γένεσιν κατὰ τὴν θεῖαν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ἀποφύνασθαι ὡς ἄρα οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ἐκ Μαρίας, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τετολυμηνάει περιγράφαι τούτους τοὺς τόπους ἀπὸ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. Laut Tertullian (*adv. Marc.* IV,7,1) begann das Evangelium des Markion mit dem Abstieg Jesu nach Kafarnaum (Lk 4,31).

31. E. NORELLI, *La profezia nel Commento a Giovanni*, in PRINZIVALLI (Hg.), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene* (Anm. 24), 302-305 verbindet mit den Markioniten ein Fragment in *Clo II,34,200* (91.17-28), wonach Jesus Christus für manche Häretiker keine Prophezeiungen gebraucht haben soll.

32. Zur origeneischen Kritik des Paulus-Bildes der Markioniten s. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Anm. 5), 16-18.

33. *CMt XV,3* (356.26–357,10 KLOSTERMANN).

III. HERMENEUTISCHE ANSÄTZE: DIE SUCHE NACH DEM GEISTIGEN SINN DES NEUEN TESTAMENTS

Es wirkt nicht überraschend, wenn auch die *Psalmenhomilien* mehrere Äußerungen des Predigers zugunsten der pneumatischen Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift, einschließlich des Neuen Testaments, enthalten. Sie entsprechen im Wesentlichen dem Anliegen und den Kriterien, die Origenes mit seinem hermeneutischen Traktat im 4. Buch von *Perì archôn* dargelegt hat, und zwar vom Motiv des *defectus litterae* als ein vom Heiligen Geist erdachtes Mittel ausgehend, um über den Buchstaben hinaus zum höheren Sinn zu gelangen³⁴. Gleichzeitig dürfen wir auch hier kein festes Schema für die geistige Interpretation erwarten, das dem Entwurf eines dreifachen Schriftsinns im Traktat ganz entsprechen würde. Wichtiger erscheint vielmehr die hermeneutische Dialektik zwischen Altem und Neuen Testament im Lichte des Evangeliums: Wenn das erste Testament das zweite vorankündigt, dann enthält für Origenes das Neue Testament, speziell die Evangelien als sein Hauptkern, den Schlüssel zur Auslegung des Alten Testaments als Buch Christi und der Kirche. Dank des Evangeliums und des Christusgeschehens wird also die geistige Erklärung der alttestamentlichen Geschichte ermöglicht, wie es Henri de Lubac in *Histoire et Esprit* klassisch dargestellt hat³⁵. Origenes selbst hat es besonders einprägsam mit dem Bild vom Entrollen der Bibel ausgedrückt, als er in der 2. *Homilie zu Psalm 76* Vers 12b kommentierte (μνησθήσομαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν θαυμασίων σου, „ich werde deiner Wunder vom Anfang an gedenken“).

Ἀνατυλίσσω γὰρ καὶ ἐξετάζω ὅλας τὰς γραφὰς ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς κοσμοποιίας καὶ βλέπω πάντα τὰ Χριστοῦ μυστήρια· ἔνεκεν τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν (Gen 2,24). Ἐκεῖνα οὐ περὶ τοῦ Ἀδάμ.

Denn ich entrolle und untersuche die ganze Schrift vom Beginn der Schöpfung und sehe all die Mysterien Christi: Darum wird der Mann seinen Vater und seine Mutter verlassen und wird sich mit seiner Frau zu einem Fleisch binden, und die zwei werden ein Fleisch sein (Gen 2,24). Dies wurde nicht über Adam und Eva

34. *H77Ps* IV,5 (395.13-16): "Ἡ οὐκ οἶδας ὅτι ἀνέμιξε τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τροπολογίαν γυμνήν, ἵνα διεγείρη τὸν ἄρροατὴν μέλλοντα καταπίπτειν ὅλον ἐπὶ τὰ σωματικὰ καὶ ὅλον ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσθητά, ἵνα διεγείρη αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ πνευματικὰ καὶ τὰ κρείττονα – zu vergleichen mit ähnlichen Formulierungen in *Prin* IV,2,9 (321.3-11 KOETSCHAU) und IV,3,4 (328.11-329.1).

35. In seinem Vorwort zum Neudruck von DE LUBAC, *Histoire et Esprit* (Anm. 3), S. VIII, resümiert Michel FÉDOU folgendermaßen: „C'est précisément le Christ qui permet une lecture spirituelle de l'histoire. Par là s'éclaire la relation des deux Testaments: l'Ancien contenait dans sa lettre même les mystères du Nouveau, mais c'est seulement à la lumière de celui-ci que son sens profond peut être dévoilé“.

καὶ τῆς Εὐας ἦν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστὶ, λέγει δὲ ὁ ἐμοῦ σοφώτερος· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (Eph 5,32)³⁶.
 gesagt, sondern *dies ist ein großes Geheimnis* – sagt der, der weiser ist als ich –, *ich aber sage es in Bezug auf Christus und die Kirche* (Eph 5,32).

Dennoch betrachtet der Alexandriner auch das Neue Testament an sich in der Perspektive der geistigen Erklärung, indem er auf eine zusätzliche Dialektik hinweist. Diese besteht nicht mehr in dem typologisch-allegorischen Verhältnis zwischen dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament schlechthin, sondern sie entfaltet sich jetzt in einem dreifachen Schritt, der auch über das Evangelium hinausgeht. Vor allem im *Johanneskommentar* hat Origenes sie deshalb mit einem dreigliedrigen Schema beschrieben „Schatten (σκιά) – Abbild (εἰκὼν) – Wahrheit (ἀλήθεια)“, das für ihn noch einmal auf Paulus nach Hebr 10,1 zurückgeht, wobei er mit dem letzten Terminus auf die Verwandlung des „sinnlichen“ Evangeliums in das „ewige“ nach Offb 14,6 hinweist (*CIO* I,8,44-46)³⁷.

In der Forschung bleibt allerdings umstritten, wieweit für die Interpretation des Neuen Testaments bei Origenes von „Allegorie“ gesprochen werden kann – und dies nicht nur wegen der Bevorzugung einer anderen Terminologie (seine Reserven gegenüber ἀλληγορία und der jeweiligen Wortgruppe werden u.a. durch die Vorliebe für ἀναγωγή, τροπολογία und ähnliche Termini deutlich)³⁸. So hat besonders Henri de Lubac darauf bestanden, dass es unpassend sei, für den *interior sensus* des Evangeliums von „Allegorie“ zu reden. Infolgedessen würde auch die Warnung von 2 Kor 3,6 vor „dem Buchstaben, der tötet“ praktisch keine Verwendung in Origenes’ Auslegung des Evangeliums finden, es sei denn, um eine missverstandene Interpretation

36. H76Ps II,3 (317.7-13).

37. Nach M. FÉDOU in DE LUBAC, *Histoire et Esprit* (Anm. 3), S. VIII-IX: „L’Évangile lui-même appelle, pour l’Alexandrin, un passage de l’histoire à l’Esprit: il s’agit de ‚transformer l’Évangile sensible en Évangile spirituel‘. Car ce qui est rapporté de Jésus doit encore advenir aujourd’hui, et ‚le combat spirituel n’est pas seulement, de la part de chacun chrétien, la continuation du drame rédempteur: il en est le processus d’achèvement‘. Bien plus, le Nouveau Testament est en son ensemble orienté vers une réalité plus profonde, ‚l’Évangile éternel‘ ... l’Évangile éternel, tel que le conçoit Origène, ‚reste en rapport étroit avec l’Évangile qui nous fut annoncé‘“. Nach SIMONETTI, *Lettera elo allegoria* (Anm. 12), S. 94, „come il Vecchio Testamento è *typos* del Nuovo Testamento, così il Nuovo Testamento è *typos* del Vangelo eterno di *Apoc.* 14, 6“.

38. M. SIMONETTI, *Introduzione al Commento a Matteo di Origene*, in T. PISCITELLI (Hg.), *Il Commento a Matteo di Origene: Atti del X Convegno di studi del Gruppo italiano di ricerca su Origene e la tradizione alessandrina, Napoli, 24-26 settembre 2008* (Adamantius. Supplementi, 2), Brescia, Morcelliana, 2011, 9-24, S. 11 beobachtet den zusätzlich reduzierten Gebrauch von ἀλληγορία in *CMt* verglichen mit *CIO*. Zur weiteren Bestätigung dieser Terminologie in den *Psalmenhomilien* s. M. SIMONETTI, *Leggendo le Omelie sui Salmi di Origene*, in *Adamantius* 22 (2016) 454-480, S. 473-474.

zu verhindern. Dabei betont de Lubac auch den Unterschied zwischen der Art und Weise, wie der Alexandriner den Römerbrief erklärt, und seiner allegorisierenden Auslegung vom Hexateuch³⁹. Auch Manlio Simonetti scheut sich seinerseits, den Begriff „Allegorie“ ohne weiteres zu gebrauchen, um die origenische Erklärung des Evangeliums im geistigen Sinne zu bezeichnen. Dieselbe Reserve gilt noch mehr für die paulinische Exegese des Alexandriners⁴⁰.

Spuren dieser Vorstellungen und ihrer jeweiligen Probleme finden sich, wie angedeutet, auch in den *Psalmhomilien*. Die ergiebigste Stelle zum hermeneutischen Ansatz des Alexandriners begegnet uns im Prolog der *1. Homilie zu Psalm 36*. Darin benutzt er einmal Hebr 1,1, um die vielfältige Bedeutung einer prophetischen Schrift wie dem Psalter zu erörtern. Demnach ist sie eigentlich nicht auf die einfache Unterscheidung zwischen wörtlichem und geistigem Sinn zu reduzieren. Genauer gesagt, trägt der Prediger zweimal hintereinander, wenn auch nicht in derselben Ordnung, die Idee eines dreifachen Sinns der Schrift vor, der aber nicht mit den drei auf den Menschen (nach 1 Thess 5,23) bezogenen Bedeutungen korrespondiert, wie sie im Traktat von *Perì archôn* vorkommen: d.h., 1. wörtlich (oder „somatisch“), 2. moralisch (oder „psychisch“) und 3. anagogisch (oder „pneumatisch“). Diese Homilie scheint folglich die dort als zweite

39. DE LUBAC, *Histoire et Esprit* (Anm. 3), S. 230-231: „Le ‚sacrement de l'Évangile‘ portait en lui sa vérité. Il peut donc bien comporter, comme la Loi, une signification spirituelle; un *interior intellectus* en doit encore être cherché, mais il serait moins à propos de parler à son sujet d'‚allégorie‘. Car cet *interior intellectus* ne vise plus en aucune façon ‚autre chose‘. De fait, nous voyons qu'Origène use de ce mot d'‚allégorie‘ avec beaucoup plus de réserve dans le cas des écrits du Nouveau Testament. Toute son exégèse prend d'ailleurs une autre allure. Sauf quelques réflexions isolées, son commentaire de l'Épître aux Romains, par exemple, ne ressemble en rien à nos explications des textes de l'Hexateuque. On ne peut s'en étonner si l'on observe que l'interprétation des Livres saints est la forme que revêt chez lui l'élaboration théologique, et que précisément, par son caractère de réflexion sur l'Écriture comme sur le Fait chrétien qui l'accomplit, la doctrine paulinienne est-elle même une théologie. Origène imite et prolonge le mouvement de l'Apôtre, en qui il voit avant tout le premier des exégètes. ... S'il arrive donc à Origène de dire qu'il y a une *lettre* qui tue jusque dans l'Évangile, cette ‚lettre qui tue‘ n'est au fond pour lui que le fruit d'une fausse interprétation: elle n'est pas vraiment la lettre de l'Évangile lui-même“.

40. M. SIMONETTI, *Il Commento a Giovanni tra esegesi e teologia*, in PRINZIVALLI (Hg.), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene* (Anm. 24), 15-41, S. 18 weist auf „due soli livelli di interpretazione, uno superficiale e uno più approfondito, non riducibili *in toto* all'opposizione lettera/allegoria, soprattutto nell'interpretazione dei testi del Nuovo Testamento“. Vgl. auch ID., *Scrittura sacra* (Anm. 14), S. 433, „la prima conclusione che si trae da questo tipo di interpretazione spirituale è che i concetti di interpretazione spirituale e allegorica non si ricoprono esattamente, nel senso che, se ogni interpretazione allegorica è spirituale, non ogni interpretazione spirituale è allegorica, in quanto a volte può essere messa in luce senza eccedere l'ambito del senso letterale. Gran parte dell'interpretazione che Origene dà di Paolo è spirituale senza essere allegorica“.

und dritte angegebenen Erklärungen geistiger Art zu drei erweitern zu wollen, denn sie weist auf einen mystischen (ἀπόρρητα und μυστικά), einen prophetisch-christologischen (τὰ περὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος καὶ τῆς ἐπιδημίας αὐτοῦ προκηρύσσει) und einen moralisch-spirituellen Sinn (τὰ ἥθη ἡμῶν θεραπεύει) hin. Man könnte auch meinen, dass der Alexandriner somit den allegorisch-pneumatischen (μυστήρια ... τὰ δεδηλωμένα) und typologisch-prophetischen (προφῆται ... περὶ τῶν μελλόντων) genauer vom moralischen Sinn (ἡθικός ... τόπος) unterscheiden wollte. Es bleibt aber unklar, wie der wörtliche Sinn in diesem Zusammenhang zu verstehen sei: Fällt er mit dem moralischen Sinn zusammen? Oder stellt dieser ebenfalls eine Form von Allegorie dar, insofern er eine Aktualisierung des Buchstabens beabsichtigt⁴¹?

Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως ὁ θεὸς λαλῶν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις (Hebr 1,1) ὅτε μὲν ἀπόρρητά τινα καὶ μυστικά διδάσκει ἡμᾶς ἐν τοῖς λεγομένοις, ὅτε δὲ τὰ περὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος καὶ τῆς ἐπιδημίας αὐτοῦ προκηρύσσει, ἔστι δ' ὅτε καὶ τὰ ἥθη ἡμῶν θεραπεύει.

Καθ' ἕκαστον δὲ τόπον γινόμενοι, πειρώμεθα παριστάνειν τὴν διαφορὰν τῶν λεγομένων· πότε μὲν προφῆται εἰσι καὶ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων λέγουσι, πότε δὲ μυστήρια εἰσι τὰ δεδηλωμένα, ὅπου δὲ ἡθικός ἐστὶ τόπος⁴².

Bald lehrt uns *Gott, der viele Male und auf vielerlei Weise durch die Propheten gesprochen hat* (Hebr 1,1), unsagbare und mystische Dinge in dem, was gesagt wird; bald kündigt er im voraus an, was den Erlöser und seine Ankunft betrifft. Manchmal bessert er auch unsere Sitten. Bei jeder Stelle (der Schrift) sollten wir uns bemühen, den Unterschied in dem, was gesagt wird, zu ziehen: ob es um Propheten geht, die über die zukünftigen Dingen sprechen, oder ob es Mysterien sind, die offenbart werden; und ob wir es mit einer ethischen Lehre zu tun haben.

Während nun die griechischen *Psalmenhomilien* meistens die hermeneutische Dialektik zwischen Altem und Neuem Testament im prophetisch-typologischen Sinn entfalten, kommt das oben erwähnte Schema „Schatten – Abbild – Wahrheit“ einmal in der 2. *Homilie zu Psalm 38* in der lateinischen Übersetzung des Rufinus vor. In seiner Auslegung von Vers 7a

41. Nach E. PRINZIVALLI, „in queste omelie, l'esegesi allegorica, con la relativa strumentazione tecnica, ha come scopo lo svelamento di verità morali. Siamo di fronte a quel terzo livello interpretativo, allegorico e di ordine etico, che si distingue da quello dogmatico e che Origene talvolta considera vertice dell'esegesi spirituale, in quanto stimola l'impegno cristiano e affretta il processo di reintegrazione nel bene della natura umana decaduta“ (*Origene. Omelie sui Salmi, Homiliae in Psalmos XXXVI – XXXVII – XXXVIII*, hg. E. PRINZIVALLI, Firenze, Nardini, 1991, S. 9). Auch SIMONETTI, *Leggendo le Omelie sui Salmi di Origene* (Anm. 38), S. 472 Anm. 79 behauptet, dass der moralische Sinn, da er ja auf eine Aktualisierung zielt, als eine „elementare Form“ von Allegorie betrachtet werden soll.

42. *H36Ps* I,1 (113.1-7).

(Μέντοιγε ἐν εἰκόνι διαπορεύεται ἄνθρωπος, „Nur wie im Abbild geht der Mensch einher“) reflektiert zunächst Origenes, wie die Schrift den Begriff „Abbild“ (εἰκῶν) in Bezug auf Gott und den Menschen gebraucht. Eine weitere Erklärung bezieht er zunächst im platonischen Sinne auf die bildhafte Natur der Welt und des gegenwärtigen Menschenlebens im Vergleich zu der vollendeten Wirklichkeit, die uns in der eschatologischen Zukunft erwartet. Aber der Alexandriner beruft sich dann ausführlicher auf Paulus als seine hermeneutische Autorität, denn für ihn hat der Apostel in Hebr 10,1 das hierarchisch fortschreitende Schema „Schatten – Abbild – Wahrheit“ als Gesamtrahmen der Heilsgeschichte begründet. „Schatten“ weist somit auf das Gesetz als Vorbereitung des Evangeliums hin, und „Abbild“ auf das Evangelium im Hinblick auf dessen Vollendung im Himmel, wobei der Alexandriner besonders auf das beliebte Thema von Jesus Christus als Hohepriester nach dem Hebräerbrief zurückgreift⁴³.

Si quis uero transire potuerit ab hac umbra, ueniat ad imaginem rerum et uideat aduentum Christi in carne factum, uideat eum pontificem, offerentem quidem et nunc patri hostias, et postmodum oblaturum: et intellegat haec omnia imagines esse spiritualium rerum et corporalibus officiis caelestia designari. Imago ergo dicitur hoc quod recipitur ad praesens et intueri potest humana natura. Si potes mente et animo penetrare caelos et sequi Iesum qui penetravit caelos et assistit nunc ului Dei pro nobis, ibi inuenies illa bona quorum umbram habuit lex et imaginem Christus ostendit in carne, quae praeparata sunt beatis, quae nec oculus uidit nec auris audiuit nec in cor hominis ascendit (1 Kor 2,9)⁴⁴.

Wenn einer imstande ist, diesen Schatten zu überwinden, soll er zum Abbild gelangen und die Ankunft Christi sehen, wie sie im Fleisch geschah. Er soll ihn als Hohepriester sehen, der doch jetzt und auch in der Zukunft dem Vater Opfer darbringt. Er soll so verstehen, dass all dies ein Abbild von geistigen Wirklichkeiten ist und dass mittels der leiblichen Handlungen himmlische Wirklichkeiten gemeint sind. Alles, was die menschliche Natur jetzt aufnehmen und einsehen kann, wird also als ‚Abbild‘ bezeichnet. Wenn Du mit deinem Geist und deinem Verstand die Himmel durchqueren kannst und Jesu folgst, der die Himmel durchquerte und jetzt vor dem Angesicht Gottes für uns steht, wirst Du dort die Güter finden, deren Schatten das Gesetz besaß und deren Abbild Christus in dem Fleisch zeigte, (jene Güter) die für die Seligen bereit sind, *was kein Auge gesehen und kein Ohr gehört hat, was keinem Menschen in den Sinn gekommen ist* (1 Kor 2,9).

43. Vgl. dazu DE LUBAC, *Histoire et Esprit* (Anm. 3), S. 220; SIMONETTI, *Lettera elo allegoria* (Anm. 12), S. 87-88, 94-95.

44. H38PsL II,2 (372.47–374.61 PRINZIVALLI).

IV. DAS NEUE TESTAMENT ALS ZWEIFACHER BESTANDTEIL DER SCHRIFT IN DEN *PSALMENHOMILIEN*

Die soeben skizzierten hermeneutischen Ansätze zielen für Origenes immer wieder darauf, die Einheit sowie die Harmonie der aus dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament bestehenden Heiligen Schrift zu demonstrieren. Die christliche Bibel schließt jedoch für den Alexandriner nicht nur ihre beiden Hauptteile Altes und Neues Testament ein. In der Tat erkennt er darin eine weitere Gliederung, die wiederholt in seinem Werk zum Vorschein kommt und auch für die Stellung des Neuen Testaments von Bedeutung ist. Wenn traditionell das Alte Testament schon in der Evangelienüberlieferung mit dem Begriffspaar „das Gesetz und die Propheten“ umschrieben wurde, so ist der Alexandriner unter den ersten Zeugen einer ähnlichen Zweiteilung innerhalb des Neuen Testaments: die „Evangelien“ und der (oder die) „Apostel“⁴⁵. Damit scheint er sich auch von seinem Vorgänger Klemens von Alexandria zu unterscheiden, weil dieser fast immer nur die Trias „Gesetz – Propheten – Evangelien“ kennt⁴⁶. Gewöhnlich findet Origenes den erwünschten Anlass, auf die viergliedrige Zusammensetzung der Bibel einzugehen, jedes Mal, wenn er seinen Zuhörern eine vertiefte Aneignung ihres Inhalts anempfiehlt. Auf diese Weise sollen die Gläubigen selbst die geistige Einheit der inspirierten Schrift nachvollziehen sowie ihren uner-schöpflichen Reichtum in all ihren Teilen persönlich entdecken⁴⁷.

Von solchem geistigen Reichtum ist die Rede in einer der ausführlichsten Passagen dieser Art, wenn der Prediger in der 3. *Homilie zu Psalm 36* dabei ist, Vers 16 zu erklären (κρείσσον οὖν ὀλίγον τῷ δικαίῳ ὑπὲρ πλοῦτον ἁμαρτωλῶν πολύν, „Besser das Wenige für den Gerechten, als der Überfluss vieler Frevler“). Der Psalmist meint nach Origenes den Reichtum „an jeder Rede und jeder Erkenntnis“, von dem Paulus in 1 Kor 1,5 spricht, aber auch denjenigen „an guten Werken“ in 1 Tim 6,18. Gerade der Apostel selbst bietet das beste Beispiel dafür, indem er nicht nur „an guten Werken“ reich ist, sondern eben auch an „jeder Rede“, die die Schrift enthält. Um

45. Eine einmalige Dreiteilung des Neuen Testaments erscheint in *Hilos* VII,1 (327.23–328.9), wo drei Gruppen von Schriften unterschieden werden: 1) die Evangelien; 2) Die Katholischen Briefe mit der Offenbarung und der Apostelgeschichte; 3) Die Paulusbriefe. NORELLI *Canone* (Anm. 20) vermutet hier eine mögliche Bearbeitung des Hieronymus.

46. Als Ausnahme s. die Stelle zur „musikalischen Harmonie“ der Schrift in *Strom.* VI,11,88,5 (476.10–11): μουσικὴν συμφωνίαν τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν νόμου καὶ προφητῶν ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀποστόλων σὺν καὶ τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. Für die gewöhnlichere Trias, vgl. u.a. *Strom.* III,2,8,5 (199.17–18): τὸν ἕνα δείκνυσι θεὸν διὰ νόμου καὶ προφητῶν καὶ εὐαγγελίου κηρυσσόμενον.

47. Vgl. z.B. *Phil* 1,28 (202.24–25), wo die Rede von der Fülle der Inspiration in der ganzen Schrift ist: ἐν προφητείᾳ ἢ νόμῳ ἢ εὐαγγελίῳ ἢ ἀποστόλῳ.

dies zu veranschaulichen, nennt der Alexandriner zunächst nacheinander die einzelnen Bücher des Pentateuchs und suggeriert daraufhin eine ähnliche Aufzählung aller Bücher vom Alten und vom Neuen Testament⁴⁸. Indem er damit erneut unterstreicht, wie Paulus in seinen Augen geradezu der Meister der Interpretation der Heiligen Schrift ist⁴⁹, zeichnet er auch sein Modell gegen alle Formen einer teilweisen Kenntnis der Bibel aus. Er plädiert für ein exegetisches Vorgehen, der dem Anspruch der Bibel in ihrer Gänze gerecht ist: Man darf nicht nur in den Evangelien eingeweiht, aber im Gesetz „nicht eingeübt sein“ (ἀγύμναστος ... περὶ τὸν νόμον), oder umgekehrt über „jede Rede des Gesetzes“, nicht aber auch über „die Apostel“ Bescheid geben können. Das befürwortete Ideal des Interpretieren besteht insofern darin, „bereit zu sein, von allen Schriften Rede zu stehen“ (ἔτοιμος διδόναι λόγον περὶ πασῶν τῶν γραφῶν) sowie „nach dem wahren <Wort> in all den Schriften zu leben“ (βιοῦν κατὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ <λόγον> ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς)⁵⁰.

Im Übrigen kommt das exegetische Vorgehen besonders da zur Geltung, wo die Aufzählung der verschiedenen Bestandteile der Schrift mit ihren jeweiligen Schwierigkeiten für die Interpretation verknüpft ist. Der Kommentar zu Vers 4 in der 1. Homilie zu Psalm 36 (Κατατρύφησον τοῦ κυρίου καὶ δώη σοι τὰ αἰτήματα τῆς καρδίας σου, „Genieße den Herrn und er gebe dir, was dein Herz begehrt“) bietet ein gutes Beispiel dafür. Wie zu erwarten, kann für Origenes nur derjenige „in den Genuss des Herrn“ kommen, der sich mit der Erklärung seiner Worte befasst, d.h. „mit der Auslegung (ἐρμηνεία) des Gesetzes, mit der Erläuterung (διηγήσει) der Propheten, mit der Lösung (λύσει) der evangelischen Gleichnisse, mit der Erhellung (σαφηνεία) der apostolischen Worte“⁵¹. Statt in dieser Aufzählung der Aufgaben

48. *H36Ps* II,6 (147.15-19): Πλούσιος οὖν ἦν Παῦλος ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνώσει καὶ παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ. Τὸ δὲ παντὶ λόγῳ τοιοῦτόν ἐστι: εἶχεν λόγον εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν, εἰς τὴν Ἔξοδον, εἰς τὸ Λευϊτικόν, εἰς τοὺς Αἰθιμοὺς, εἰς τὸ Δευτερονόμιον, οὕτως καθέξῃς εἰς τὰς γραφὰς τὰς παλαιὰς καὶ εἰς τὰς εὐαγγελικὰς. Ἐκεῖνος οὖν ἐπλούτει ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ.

49. Vgl. dazu besonders COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Anm. 5), S. 117-148.

50. P.W. MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012 ist auf diese Stelle, die gerade „das exegetische Leben“ thematisiert, nicht eingegangen.

51. *H36Ps* I,4 (122.14-18): Ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸ μόνον ἀκούων λόγων προτρεπτικῶν τρέφεται, ὁ δὲ ἐπιδιδούς ἑαυτὸν ἐρμηνεῖα νόμου, διηγήσει προφητῶν, λύσει παραβολῶν εὐαγγελικῶν, σαφηνεῖα λόγων ἀποστολικῶν, ὁ τούτοις ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδιδούς κατατρύφῃ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἐσθίει οὐ πρὸς ἀνάγκην οὐδὲ πρὸς μόνην τροφήν. Auch *H77Ps* IV,7 (398.13-17) knüpft an dasselbe Motiv an: Ὁ γὰρ γευσάμενος πνευματικῆς τροφῆς οἶδεν τίς ἡ τρυφή ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς. Ἴδε μοι διήγησιν νομικῆν, κατανόησον σαφήνειαν προφητικῆν, ἴδε εὐαγγελικὸν ἀναπτυσσόμενον λόγον, κατανόησον ἀπόστολον φωτίζοντά σε τῇ σαφηνεῖα τῆς γραφῆς, εἰ μὴ αἰσθάνῃ ὅτι ἐναντία τρυφῆ τῆς τοῦ σώματος τρυφῆς ἢ τρυφῆ ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαύτη, ἣν ὁ θεὸς βούλεται ἡμᾶς τρυφᾶν.

eines Interpreten der Bibel in all ihren verschiedenen Teilen einfach eine sprachliche *uariatio* von Synonymen zu sehen, soll die Prägnanz von einzelnen Termini nicht unterschätzt werden. Dies lässt sich vor allem in Bezug auf das Neue Testament zeigen: in den Evangelien betont Origenes die besondere Schwierigkeit bei der Auslegung der Gleichnisse; deshalb verwendet er das Wort λύσις („Lösung“), einen *terminus technicus* der *Quaestiones-Literatur*⁵². Übrigens scheint er dadurch eine Andeutung zu machen auf die „esoterische“ Interpretation der Gleichnisse, die den Jüngern zukommt, neben der „exoterischen“ Erklärung, die für die Menge bestimmt ist⁵³. Auch betreffs der Worte der Apostel mag die Wahl eines Terminus wie *σαφήνεια* nicht ohne Bedeutung sein. Gerade bei Paulus, der sich selber als „ein Stümper im Reden“ (2 Kor 11,6) ausgibt, muss sich der Interpret nach Origenes zunächst darum bemühen, den komplizierten Satzbau des Apostels zu erhellen⁵⁴. Aber im Allgemeinen bringt auch das eher generisch anmutende Wort *σαφήνεια* zum Bewusstsein, wie die gesamte Schrift, die Apostel eingeschlossen, der Erklärung eines Interpreten bedarf, ohne sich auf eine oberflächliche, wenn nicht sogar falsche Lektüre einzulassen.

Wenn Gesetz, Propheten, Evangelien und Apostel als je eine geistige „Weide“ (νομή) den Gläubigen als Schafen Christi – nach der *1. Homilie zu Psalm 73* – ihre spirituelle Nahrung sichern⁵⁵, werden sie dagegen, laut

52. Vgl. L. PERRONE, „*Quaestiones et responsiones*“ in *Origene: Prospettive di un'analisi formale dell'argomentazione esegetico-teologica*, in *Cristianesimo nella storia* 15 (1994) 1-50.

53. Derselbe Ausdruck λύσις παραβολῶν befindet sich in *CC II,64* (186.12-17): Ἀλλὰ καὶ εἶπερ κατ' ἰδίαν τοῖς ἰδίοις μαθηταῖς ἐπέλυεν τὰς παραβολάς, μετ' ἐπικρύψεως τοῖς ἕξω ὄχλοις εἰρημέναις, ὡσπερ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς ἦσαν κρείττους οἱ ἀκούοντες τῆς λύσεως τῶν παραβολῶν παρὰ τοῖς ἀκούοντας τῶν χωρὶς λύσεων παραβολῶν, οὕτως καὶ ταῖς ὕψει πάντως μὲν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐγὼ δ' ἠγοῦμαι ὅτι καὶ τοῦ σώματος. Vgl. auch *CMt XIV,12* (304.13-22): διὰ τοῦτο ἀπέκρυψαν οἱ τὰ εὐαγγέλια γράφοντες τὴν σαφήνειαν τῶν παραβολῶν, ἐπεὶ μεῖζονα ἦν τὰ κατ' αὐτὰς δηλούμενα τῆς τῶν γραμμάτων φύσεως, καὶ ἦν γε ἐκάστη λύσις καὶ ἡ σαφήνεια τῶν τοιοῦτων παραβολῶν τοιαύτη, ὡς μηδὲ αὐτὸν „τὸν κόσμον χωρεῖν τὰ γραφόμενα“ εἰς τὰς τοιαύτας παραβολὰς „βιβλία“ (Joh 21,25). Zur doppelten Auslegung s. außerdem *CC III,21* (217.19-24): Καὶ οὕτω λέγω περὶ τῆς ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις τηρήσεως πάντων τῶν γεγραμμένων· ὧν ἕκαστον πολὺν καὶ δυσθεώρητον οὐ μόνον τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀλλὰ καὶ τισι τῶν συνετῶν περιέχει λόγον, ἔχοντα διήγησιν βαθυτάτην παραβολῶν, ὧν τοῖς ἕξω ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, τηρῶν αὐτῶν τὴν σαφήνειαν τοῖς ὑπερβεβηκόσι τὰς ἐξωτερικὰς ἀκοὰς καὶ κατ' ἰδίαν αὐτῶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ (Mk 4,11.34) προσερχομένοις. Zu Recht unterstreicht G. PISCINI, *L'interprétation des paraboles chez Origène: Originalité, codification et variations d'une méthode exégétique*, in *Revue des Études Tardo-Antiques* 5 (2015-2016) 35-65 die besondere Bedeutung der *quaestio* für die origenische Auslegung der Gleichnisse.

54. COCCHINI, *Il Paolo di Origene* (Anm. 5), S. 167-178.

55. *H73Ps I,3* (229.9-13): Τίς οὖν ἡ νομὴ καὶ νομὴ προβάτων; Τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα νομὴ ἐστίν· νομὴ ἐστὶν ὁ νόμος, νομὴ οἱ προφῆται, τὰ εὐαγγέλια, οἱ ἀπόστολοι. Ἐὰν μὴ νευηθῆς ἐπὶ ταῦτα, λιμῶ διαφθεῖρεις. Εἰσέλθωμεν ἐπὶ τὴν νομὴν ταύτην· καὶ κυρίου ἔργον ἐστὶ ποιῆσαι ἡμᾶς, ὥστε εἰπεῖν ἄν κύριος ποιμαίνει με καὶ οὐδὲν με ὑστερήσει· εἰς τόπον χλόης ἐκεῖ με κατασκήρωσον (Ps 22,1-2). „Weide“ kommt, nach *CEz XX = Phil 11,2* (380.1-5), mit

der 1. *Homilie zu Psalm 77*, von den Häretikern zugunsten ihrer Irrlehren missbraucht: Sie glauben, aus jedem Teil der Bibel ihre Thesen entwickeln zu können⁵⁶. Aber es ist auch verfehlt, einen dieser Teile gegen den anderen auszuspielen, denn dies geht gegen die besagte Einheit und Harmonie der Schrift, die Jesus selbst mit seinen Worten im Evangelium begründet hat: So „bewegen sich (die Häretiker) außerhalb des Alten Testaments, das unseren Herrn Jesus Christus prophezeit“⁵⁷. Der Alexandriner trägt diesen Punkt, der ihm besonders am Herzen lag, auch mittels einer Anekdote sehr einprägsam vor. So habe jemand einmal protestiert, als er beim Gottesdienst das Deuteronomium lesen hörte: „Das ist doch eine Synagoge der Juden – als ob es keine Evangelien gäbe!“. Dabei ließ er völlig außer Acht – wie Origenes entgegnet –, dass sogar Jesus sich des Deuteronomiums als Gottes Wort in der Geschichte seiner Versuchung gegen den Teufel bediente⁵⁸. Umgekehrt, da Christus der „Gott des Evangeliums und des Gesetzes“ ist, finden die Worte Jesu in Lk 10,19 („Seht, ich habe euch die Vollmacht gegeben, auf Schlangen und Skorpione zu treten und die ganze Macht des Feindes zu überwinden“) nach der 7. *Homilie zu Psalm 77* eine Bestätigung in Weish 16,10, wo es heißt: „Deine Söhne aber wurden nicht einmal durch die Zähne giftspritzender Schlangen überwältigt; denn dein Erbarmen kam ihnen zu Hilfe und heilte sie“⁵⁹. Hier entspricht im übrigen die

„Wasser“ zusammen. Dies geschieht in Bezug auf Gesetz, Propheten, Evangelien und Apostel; es geht darum, weder „das Weideland“ der Schrift „zu zertrampeln“ noch ihr „Wasser mit den Füßen zu verschmutzen“ (Ez 34,17-19), wie es die Häretiker (Gnostiker und Markioniten) tun.

56. *H77Ps* I,2 (353.5-8): Πᾶσα αἵρεσις ἀπὸ τῶν γραμμάτων φέρεται τὰ ἀσεβῆ νοήματα καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτῶν οἴονται αὐτὰ κατασκευάζειν· ἀπὸ εὐαγγελίων, ἀπὸ ἀποστόλων, τινὲς δὲ αἰρέσεις ἀπὸ νόμου, ἀπὸ προφητῶν.

57. *H77Ps* II,8 (379.5-13): Καὶ οὐκ ἐφύλαξαν τὴν διαθήκην τοῦ θεοῦ· οὗτοι <οἱ> υἱοὶ Ἐφραΐμ μόνοι – πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ Ἐφραΐμ εἰσι ὅσοι προσέχουσι τοῖς ἔξω τῆς ἐκκλησίας λόγοις – καὶ οὗτοι οὐκ ἐφύλαξαν τὴν διαθήκην αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἔξω βαίνουσι τῆς διαθήκης τῆς παλαιᾶς, ἀφ’ ἧς ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς προφητεύεται, ὡς αὐτὸς διδάσκει λέγων· εἰ ἐπιστεύετε Μωϋσεῖ, ἐπιστεύετε ἂν ἐμοί· περὶ γὰρ ἐμοῦ ἐκεῖνος ἔγραψεν (Joh 5,46). Αὐτὸς διδάσκει λέγων ἐν τῇ παραβολῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου· ἔχουσι Μωϋσέα καὶ τοὺς προφήτας· ἀκουσάτωσαν αὐτῶν (Lk 16,29). Καὶ γέγονε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ τὰ εἰρημμένα· ἐκ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἀπ’ αἰῶνος τοῦ θεοῦ προφητῶν (Lk 1,70).

58. *H77Ps* II,7 (382.11-15): Καὶ οἶδα ἐγὼ ποτε ἀκούσαντά τινα Δευτερονομίου ἀναγινωσκόμενον ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ εἰπόντα· “τοῦτο συναγωγὴ Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν· ἀναγινώσκειται ὡς μὴ ὄντων εὐαγγελίων!”. Οὐχ ἑώρα δὲ ἐκεῖνος ὅτι ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ κύριος μεγάλην σύστασιν πεποίηκε τῷ Δευτερονομίῳ.

59. *H77Ps* VII,2 (435.5-10): Ἐὰν δὲ τις ᾗ ἅγιος, καὶ ἐν ἀπόροις εὐπορεῖ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν χαλεπωτάτων οὐ βλάπτεται· ἅπερ γὰρ εἶπέν μοι ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῷ δίδωμι ὑμῖν ἔξουσίαν πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων, καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἔχθρου (Lk 10,19). Ταῦτα, ἐπεὶ εἶς ἦν θεὸς εὐαγγελίου καὶ νόμου, γεγένηται καὶ τότε. Καὶ δράκοντες ἐπαναστάντες τῷ λαῷ, τοῖς ἡμαρτηκόσιν, ὅτε μετενόησαν οἱ ἡμαρτηκότες, οὐδὲν αὐτοὺς βλάψαι δεδύνηται.

Nebeneinanderstellung von einer neutestamentlichen und einer alttestamentlichen Stelle der Methode für eine gut begründete Argumentation anhand der Schrift, die der Alexandriner in der *1. Homilie zu Jeremias* (und auch anderswo) mit Hilfe von 2 Kor 13,1 (Dt 19,15) beschreibt⁶⁰.

«Καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ στόματι δύο καὶ τριῶν μαρτύρων σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα (2 Kor 13,1; Dt 19,15) μᾶλλον ἀρμόζει ἐπὶ τῶν διηγήσεων ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἵνα στῆσω τὰ ῥήματα τῆς ἐρμηνείας λαβὼν μάρτυρας δύο ἀπὸ καινῆς καὶ παλαιᾶς διαθήκης, λαβὼν μάρτυρας τρεῖς ἀπὸ εὐαγγελίου, ἀπὸ προφήτου, ἀπὸ ἀποστόλου· οὕτως γὰρ σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα (2 Kor 13,1; Dt 19,15)⁶¹.

<Und die Worte>: *Durch die Aussage von zwei oder drei Zeugen wird jede Sache entschieden* (2 Kor 13,1; Dt 19,15) eignen sich mehr für die Exegesen als für die Menschen, damit ich die Sache der Interpretation entscheide, indem ich zwei Zeugen aus dem Neuen und dem Alten Testament, (oder) drei aus dem Evangelium, dem Propheten und dem Apostel nehme. Denn auf diese Weise *wird jede Sache entschieden* (2 Kor 13,1; Dt 19,15).

V. DIE „ZEUGEN“ AUS DEM NEUEN TESTAMENT:

EIN ÜBERBLICK ÜBER DIE HAUPTZITATE IN DEN *PSALMENHOMILIEN*

Auch wenn die so empfohlene Berufung auf die biblischen Zeugen nicht zu systematisch aufgefasst werden sollte, wie es methodisch gesehen bei Origenes häufig der Fall ist, entwickelt er durchgehend seine Argumentation anhand von *testimonia* aus der Schrift. Die Kommentierung der Psalmen zieht demnach in unseren Homilien eine Fülle von neutestamentlichen Zitaten nach sich, die es sich lohnen würde, analytisch zu sichten. Im Gegenzug müsste allerdings auch der Gebrauch der Psalmen in den Evangelien und den sonstigen neutestamentlichen Schriften im Lichte der origeneischen Auslegung untersucht werden. Um nur ein Beispiel davon zu geben: In der *2. Homilie zu Psalm 15* nimmt Ps 15,8-10, die in der Rede des Petrus (Apg 2,25-28) als Schriftbeweis für den auferstandenen Herrn zitierte Passage, besonderen Raum ein. Der Alexandriner benutzt die Stelle, um die christologische Interpretation von Psalm 15 in prosopologischer Hinsicht zu untermauern. Dabei entfaltet er die Vorstellung vom Erlöser als Mensch gewordenem Gottessohn und von seinem Heilsgeschehen zwischen dem „Abstieg“ (*κατάβασις*) aus dem Himmel bis zum Tode am Kreuz und dem glorreichen „Aufstieg“ (*ἀνάβασις*) aus der Unterwelt bis zur

60. Vgl. auch *CMt* X,15 (19.5-8) und M. SIMONETTI, *Omelia I: Elezione del profeta*, in E. DAL COVOLO – M. MARITANO (Hgg.), *Omelia su Geremia: Lettura origeniana* (Biblioteca di scienze religiose, 165), Roma, Las, 2001, 11-22, S. 14-15.

61. *Hler* I,7 (6.9-14 KLOSTERMANN – NAUTIN).

Vereinigung mit dem Vater⁶². Dank dieser Auslegung eignet sich der Psalm dazu, die Angaben der neutestamentlichen Zeugnisse zum Heilswerk Christi zu „ergänzen“.

Im Allgemeinen scheinen die Psalmen von Origenes besonders herangezogen worden zu sein, um die Passion Jesu zu beleuchten, wobei er dadurch die entsprechenden Ansätze in den Evangelien weiter fortsetzt⁶³. Diese Haltung erklärt etwa die wiederholte Anwendung von Ps 2,2 („Die Könige der Erde sind aufgestanden, die Fürsten haben sich verbündet gegen den Herrn und seinen Gesalbten“): Der Alexandriner bevorzugt dieses Zitat sogar vor dem christologisch wichtigen *testimonium* von Vers 7 („Den Beschluss des Herrn will ich kundtun. Er sprach zu mir: ‚Mein Sohn bist du. Heute habe ich dich gezeugt‘“), um die teuflischen und die menschlichen Mächte zu zeigen, die hinter den Leiden Christi stecken⁶⁴. Er knüpft damit an das einzige Zitat von Ps 2,1-2 in Apg 4,25-26 an, und an den auf die beiden Psalmverse folgenden Kommentar im Gebet der Apostel in Apg 4,27 („Wahrhaftig, *verbündet* haben sich in dieser Stadt gegen deinen heiligen Knecht Jesus, den du gesalbt hast, Herodes und Pontius Pilatus mit den Heiden und den Stämmen Israels“). Jedoch spielen in den Augen des Origenes die Teufelmächte – die gemäß der 2. *Homilie zu Psalm 73* in den Juden unsichtbar wirken (ἐνεργουμένων ὑπ’ αὐτῶν) – eine größere Rolle als die geschichtlichen Protagonisten von Apg 4,27⁶⁵. Nicht umsonst verbindet er, sowohl im *Johannes-* als auch im *Matthäuskommentar*, das Gebet Jesu in Getsemani mit Ps 2,2: Der Erlöser reagierte damit auf die Attacke der Teufelmächte gegen ihn und ließ sich nur anfänglich von ihnen betrüben; denn er griff auf das Gebet zurück. Dies war wiederum nach Meinung des Alexandriners ein Beten der Psalmen, in diesem Fall speziell mit den

62. L. PERRONE, *Abstieg und Aufstieg Christi nach Origenes: Zur Auslegung von Psalm 15 in den Homilien von Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*, in *Theologie und Philosophie* 89 (2014) 321-340.

63. Zur „Vorliebe“ des Origenes für die Passionsgeschichte, vgl. DE LUBAC, *Histoire et Esprit* (Anm. 3), S. 208-209.

64. S. MORLET, *Origen as Exegetical Source in Eusebius' Prophetic Extracts*, in A. JOHNSON – J. SCHOTT (Hgg.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations* (Hellenic Studies, 60), Washington, DC, Center for Hellenic Studies; Cambridge, MA – London, Harvard University Press, 2013, 207-237, S. 217-218.

65. Zum origeneischen Gebrauch von Ps 2,2 s. *H73Ps* II,2 (239.7-10); *H75Ps* 7 (291.7-16); *H77Ps* II,5 (375.4-7); *FrPs* 2,2 (PG 12, 1101A-B); *FrPs* 118,23-24 (226.1-9 HARL); *Clō* XXXII,23,296 (416.13-18); *CMt* XII,1 (70); XIII,9 (204); *CMtS* 76 (177); 115 (241-242); *HGn* IX,3 (143.2-11); *HIer* X,7 (77.17-22); *FrLam* 107 (273.20-25). Wie auch DE LUBAC, *Histoire et Esprit* (Anm. 3), S. 201, in Bezug auf *CMtS* 125 (260-261), bemerkt hat: „Derrière les soldats qui bafouent Jésus durant sa Passion, il faut voir une autre cohorte, celle des Princes invisibles de ce siècle, dont parlent le Psalmiste [Ps 2,2] et Saint Paul [1 Kor 2,8]“.

Worten von Ps 26,1-3 („Der Herr ist mein Licht und mein Heil: Vor wem sollte ich mich fürchten?...“)⁶⁶.

Die Interpretation des Neuen Testaments durch die „Brille“ der Psalmen verleiht also den Berichten der Evangelien eine psychologische Tiefe sowie eine dramatische Dynamik, wie wir es in der *1. Homilie zu Psalm 73* gut beobachten können. Der Prediger nimmt hier Vers 3b (ὅσα ἐπονηρεύσατο ὁ ἐχθρὸς ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ, „all das Böse, das der Feind dem Heiligen getan hat“) als Rahmenangabe für die Angriffe des Teufels gegen Jesu, den „Heiligen“ – τῷ ἁγίῳ so verstanden, statt als „Heiligtum“, nach der Septuaginta-Übersetzung –, und zwar durch die Versuchungen am Anfang seiner öffentlichen Tätigkeit wie auch durch den Verrat des Judas und die Passionsgeschichte. Besonders an diesem tragischen Epilog demonstriert Origenes die Vielfalt der teuflischen Einwirkungen, die ähnlich den unermesslichen Taten Jesu nach Joh 21,25 sich ebenfalls „in Büchern nicht beschreiben lassen“.

Ἄλλὰ πολλὰ ἐπονηρεύσατο κατὰ τοῦ ἁγίου ὁ διάβολος. Ἐπονηρεύσατο ἐνεργήσας τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους καὶ τὸν λαὸν εἰπεῖν· σταύρωσον, σταύρωσον αὐτόν (Lk 23,21; Joh 19,6.15), αἶρε ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς τὸν τοιοῦτον (Apg 22,22; vgl. Lk 23,18). Ἐπονηρεύσατο <ἐνεργήσας> ἐκεῖνους εἰπεῖν· τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν (Mt 27,25). Ἐπονηρεύσατο ποιήσας φίλον γενέσθαι τὸν Ἡρώδη τῷ Πιλάτῳ, τὸν πρὸ τούτου ἐχθρόν (vgl. Lk 23,12). Ἐπονηρεύσατο ποιήσας τὸν Πιλάτον νίψασθαι καὶ μωρῶς ἀφοσιώσασθαι. ἐνίψατο τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ μετὰ τὸ μαστιγῶσαι τὸν σωτήρα καὶ εἰπεῖν· ἄθῳος ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ δικαίου (Mt 27,24). Ὅσα γέγραπται εἰρηκέναι, ὅσα δὲ καὶ ἄλλα ἐστὶν ἃ οὐ γέγραπται πεπονηρεῦσθαι ἐκεῖνον, οὐδ’ αὐτὸν γὰρ οἶμαι τὸν κόσμον χωρῆσαι, οὐ μόνον περὶ τῶν ἄλλων τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πράξεων τὰ γραφόμενα βιβλία (Joh 21,25), ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου πονηρεύσεως,

Aber der Teufel hat viel Böses gegen den Heiligen getan. Er hat Böses getan, als er die Hohepriester, die Ältesten und das Volk dazu bewegte zu sagen: „Kreuzige ihn, kreuzige ihn!“ (Lk 23,21; Joh 19,6.15); „schaffe diesen Menschen aus der Erde!“ (Apg 22,22; vgl. Lk 23,18). Er hat Böses getan, als er jene dazu <bewegte> zu sagen: „Sein Blut komme über uns und unsere Kinder“ (Mt 27,25). Er hat Böses getan, als er Herodes zum Freund des Pilatus machte, der zuvor sein Feind war (vgl. Lk 23,12). Er hat Böses getan, als er den Pilatus sich (die Hände) waschen und auf dumme Weise reinigen ließ. Er wusch seine Hände, nachdem der Erlöser gegeißelt wurde und nachdem er sagte: „Ich bin unschuldig am Blut des Gerechten“ (Mt 27,24). Was geschrieben steht, das gesagt wurde, aber auch all das andere Böse, das jener (der Teufel) getan hat und nicht geschrieben wurde, „nicht einmal die ganze Welt, denke ich, könnte die Bücher fassen, die

66. Vgl. *Clo* XXXII,23,295-296 (466.4-24); *CMtS* 90 (205) u. 125 (260-261). Ich habe diese Stellen im folgenden Aufsatz untersucht: *L'esempio di Gesù orante: la preghiera al Getsemani nell'interpretazione di Origene*, in *La Sapienza della Croce* 31 (2016) 257-283, S. 265 mit Anm. 21, 274-275.

ὅσα ἐπονηρεύσατο ὁ ἐχθρὸς ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ man schreiben müßte“ (Joh 21,25):
(Ps 73,3b)⁶⁷. nicht allein, was die übrigen Taten Jesu,
sondern auch was die Bosheit des Teu-
fels angeht, „all das Böse, das der Feind
dem Heiligen getan hat“ (Ps 73,3b).

Zum Schluss versuchen wir wenigstens eine, wenn auch knappe, Vorstellung davon zu geben, welche Zitate aus dem Neuen Testament für den Alexandriner „strategisch“ besonders wichtig sind, wobei eine genauere statistische Untersuchung bei anderer Gelegenheit geboten werden soll. Auf jeden Fall darf die Bereicherung des neuen Zitatenschatzes, den die *Psalmenhomilien* jetzt liefern, nicht ganz ignoriert werden. Da bisher in den auf griechisch erhaltenen Schriften des Origenes der 2. Petrusbrief – wie auch der 2. und 3. Johannesbrief – gar nicht vorkam⁶⁸, sei wenigstens auf das Zitat von 2 Petr 2,22 in der 6. *Homilie zu Psalm 77* hingewiesen („Auf sie trifft das wahre Sprichwort zu: *Der Hund kehrt zurück zu dem, was er erbrochen hat* [Spr 26,11], und: *Die gewaschene Sau wälzt sich wieder im Dreck*“)⁶⁹. Der Prediger wendet diese Stelle auf ähnliche Weise auf die Heiden an, die nach ihrer Bekehrung zum christlichen Glauben in die alte „Sünde“ des Heidentums zurückfallen. Die anderen Zitate von 2 Petr 2,22 in den lateinischen Werken beziehen sich vielmehr einfach auf den Rückfall der Gläubigen in die Sünde nach der Taufe⁷⁰.

Generell bestätigen die *Psalmenhomilien*, ohne damit das eigene Gewicht der anderen Evangelien, vor allem des Johannesevangeliums, bestreiten zu wollen, die schon bekannte Tatsache, wonach das am meisten zitierte Evangelium das Matthauevangelium ist. Überhaupt zieht Origenes das erste Evangelium mehr als die sonstigen Bücher der Bibel heran, wobei der Psalter an zweiter Stelle steht⁷¹. Es ist dann nicht überraschend, wenn der Alexandriner sich auf die Seligpreisung derer, die ein reines Herz haben (Mt 5,8),

67. *H73Ps* I,7 (234.1-12).

68. NORELLI, *Canone* (Anm. 20), S. 57: „nei suoi scritti pervenutici in greco Origene non cita né 2 Pt, né 2 e 3 Gv, mentre per quelli giuntici in latino abbiamo *CRm* 8,7; *HLv* 4,4; *HEx* 12,4 per 2 Pt; *HEx* 3,2; 4,2 per 2 Gv“.

69. *H77Ps* VI,3 (430.7-11): ἐπέστρεψαν γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἣν καταλείοιπασιν, οἷον ἐὰν ἴδῃς καὶ σήμερόν τινα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν πιστεύοντα, καὶ μετὰ τὸ δοκοῦν πιστεύειν καὶ ἀκοῦσαι λόγων θεοῦ, πάλιν ἐπιστρέψαντα ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον ἁμάρτημα, τί ἄλλο ἐρεῖς περὶ τούτου, ἢ ὅτι κῶνον ἐστὶν ἐπιστρέφας ἐπὶ τὸν ἴδιον ἔμετον (Spr 26,11) καὶ ὃς λουσαμένη ἐν κολίματι [εἰς κολισμὸν bzw. κύλισμα] βορβόρου (2 Petr 2,22).

70. Vgl. *HGn* XI,1 (102.11-12), wo Origenes 2 Petr 2,22 mit Ps 37,6 verbindet; *HLv* XI,2 (452.1-4); *HJos* XVI,1 (395.8).

71. Diese Angaben entnehme ich aus *Biblia Patristica: Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*. 3. Bd.: *Origène*, Paris, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1991.

am häufigsten bezieht⁷². Beim Stichwort „Herz“ geht es nämlich nicht nur um einen zentralen Aspekt seiner Anthropologie, denn das Herz ist der Sitz des *hegemonikon* bzw. des Intellekts (νοῦς), wo auch das Abbild Gottes nach Gen 1,27 seinen Platz im „inneren Menschen“ hat⁷³. Insofern ist das Herz das Organ, das berufen ist, die geistige Schau Gottes zu vollziehen. Auch das Motiv „Licht der Welt“, nach Mt 5,14 auf die Jünger Christi bezogen, kommt mehrmals vor, wobei die geringere Frequenz dieser Stelle, verglichen mit Mt 5,8, das sonst bezeugte ungleichmäßige Verhältnis zwischen beiden Zitaten aus der Bergpredigt bei Origenes widerspiegelt⁷⁴. Erwähnenswert ist auch seine Benutzung der Seligpreisung, die an die Sanftmütigen adressiert ist (Mt 5,5)⁷⁵. Denn in Jesu Versprechen, dass sie „das Land erben“ werden, klingt Ps 36,11 nach (Οἱ δὲ πραεῖς κληρονομήσουσι γῆν), was dem Interpreten den willkommenen Anlass bietet, erneut die Einheit zwischen dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament gegen Markion zu beteuern und die Vorwegnahme des Evangeliums im Psalter zu betonen⁷⁶. Darüber hinaus lässt ihn diese Stelle auch auf das Weltbild zurückkommen, indem er die „wahre Erde“ präziser im Himmel verortet: Sie ist das irdische Paradies, das in der neunten Sphäre (ἀντίχθων), oberhalb derjenigen der Fixsterne, seinen Platz hat⁷⁷.

72. Vgl. *H15Ps* II,2 (94.12-13); *H36Ps* IV,1 (158.13-14); *H76Ps* I,6 (305.4-5); *H76Ps* III,1 (326.3); *H76Ps* IV,1 (342.5-7). Aus *Biblia Patristica* (Anm. 71), S. 230-231 ergeben sich insgesamt 56 Zitate bzw. Anspielungen für Mt 5,8.

73. Nach *Clo* I,30,206 (37.15-16) ist das „Herz“ τὸ διανοητικόν. Vgl. H. CROUZEL, *Le cœur selon Origène*, in *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 85 (1984) 5-16, 99-110.

74. *H67Ps* I,6 (191.12-15); *H73Ps* III,4 (258.14-15); *H77Ps* VIII,9 (463.25-464.1); *H81Ps* I,1 (509.10-12). Die Liste von *Biblia Patristica* (Anm. 71), S. 231 beträgt 31 Zitate bzw. Anspielungen.

75. *H15Ps* I,5 (82.12-13); *H36Ps* II,4 (132.19); *H36Ps* II,6 (135.4-7); *H75Ps* 8 (290.11). *Biblia Patristica* (Anm. 71), S. 230 zeigt 31 Zitate bzw. Anspielungen.

76. *H36Ps* II,6 (135.4-7): Τὸ γὰρ εἰρημένον ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, τὸ μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς (Mt 5,5), ὅρα τίνα τρόπον τὸ πρότερον εἶρητο <διὰ Δαυλδ> ὑπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πνεύματος, ὅπερ ἦν καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. Zum Verhältnis Psalter-Evangelium s., z.B., ?*FrPs* 7,5 (PG 12, 1180A): Εἰ ἀνταπέδωκα τοῖς ἀνταποδιδούσι μοι κακά, ἀποπέσοιμι ἄρα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν μου κενός, κ. τ. ε. (Ps 7,5). Εἰ ὁ παιδαγωγὸς νόμος συγχωρεῖ ἀνταποδιδόναι κακά, ὡς νηπίοις τοῖς παιδαγωγουμένοις ἔστι, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστι νήπιος ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ, ἀλλ' ἔκτοτε εὐαγγελικὸς τις; *CC* VII,24 (175.18-22); VIII,35 (251.3-12).

77. *H36Ps* II,4 (132.15-19): Ἀλλὰ οἱ πονηροῦμένοι ἐξολοθρευθήσονται, οἱ δὲ ὑπομένοντες τὸν κόριον αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσι γῆν (Ps 36,9): ἔστιν τις ἄλλη γῆ, ἣ λέγεται παρὰ τισιν ἀντίχθων. Ἐκεῖνη ἔστιν ἡ κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς ἀγαθὴ, βέουσα γάλα καὶ μέλι, ἦν ὁ σωτὴρ ἐπαγγέλλεται τοῖς πραεῖσι λέγων μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσι τὴν γῆν (Mt 5,5). Zu den kosmologischen Vorstellungen, die diese Auslegung hervorruft, vgl. C. KÖCKERT, *Räumliche Vorstellungen im Weltbild des Origenes und ihr Verhältnis zum zeitgenössischen astronomischen Weltbild*, in C. MARKSCHIES – J. ZACHUBER (Hgg.), *Die Welt als Bild: Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur Visualität von Weltbildern* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 107), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2008, 69-79.

Wenn im Markusevangelium, wie erwähnt, vor allem Jesu esoterische Erläuterung der Gleichnisse vor seinen Jüngern nach Mk 4,(10-11).34 die Aufmerksamkeit des Alexandriners zieht⁷⁸, begegnet aus dem Lukasevangelium am häufigsten Lk 10,19⁷⁹. Christi Worte, nach denen seine Jünger gegen die Angriffe des Teufels siegreich sein werden, sind, im geistigen Sinn verstanden, eines der Hauptzitate zum Thema „spiritueller Kampf“ bei Origenes. Die Bezugnahme darauf bringt übrigens verschiedene Aspekte ans Licht, die seine Verwendung von neutestamentlichen Stellen prägen: Einerseits dient Lk 10,19, wie wir gesehen haben, als Beweis für die *symphöhung* zwischen dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament⁸⁰; andererseits stützt das Zitat eine dominierende Note in der origeneischen Auslegung, und zwar nicht nur des Psalters, da es den grundsätzlichen Agonismus des spirituellen Lebens fördert und gleichzeitig belohnt⁸¹. Indem der Alexandriner die geistige Auslegung von Lk 10,19 entfaltet, befürwortet er gleichzeitig die allegorische Interpretation des Neuen Testaments auch anhand dieser Stelle. Die Rede Jesu darf nämlich nicht wörtlich genommen werden, spricht sie doch im Gegenteil zugunsten einer spirituellen Hermeneutik⁸². Sie wird dann zu einem ähnlichen Fall wie die Evangelienzitate, die im 4. Buch von *Peri archôn*, als *adymata* und *aloga* eingestuft, den *defectus litterae* anzeigen und somit die Notwendigkeit der pneumatischen Auslegung erhärten⁸³.

78. Vgl. *supra*, S. 47 u. Anm. 53. Es handelt sich u.a. um ein wichtiges *testimonium* für das Traktat über die Willensfreiheit (*Prin* III,1); s. dazu A. MONACI CASTAGNO, *L'interpretazione origeniana di Mc 4,10-12: Aspetti e problemi della difesa del libero arbitrio*, in L. PERRONE (Hg.), *Il cuore indurito del Faraone: Origene e il problema del libero arbitrio* (Origini, 3), Genova, Marietti, 1992, 85-104.

79. *H67Ps* II,7 (218.14-219.3); *H73Ps* II,6 (247.9-12); *H73Ps* III,7 (262.13-19); *H77Ps* VII,2 (435.5-10). Für den weiteren Gebrauch s. u.a. *Prin* IV,1,5 (300.12-14 KOETSCHAU); *EM* 36 (34.4-8); *Orat* XIII,4 (328.22-329.1); *CC* II,48 (170.21-26); VII,57 (207.3-7); VII,70 (219.22-26). Die Liste von *Biblia Patristica* (Anm. 71), S. 298 zählt 24 Zitate bzw. Anspielungen von Lk 10,19.

80. Vgl. *supra*, Anm. 59.

81. *H67Ps* II,7 (218.14-219.3): Εἶπεν γὰρ ὁ σωτὴρ· δίδωμι ὑμῖν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἔχθροῦ, καὶ οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς οὐ μὴ ἀδικήσῃ (Lk 10,19). Καὶ ἡμεῖς δέ, εἴπερ Ἰησοῦ μαθηταὶ ἔσμεν, ἐλάβομεν ταύτην τὴν ἐξουσίαν. Οὐ πάντως δὲ ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐξουσίαν χροῖται τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ, ἀλλὰ μακάριος ὁ λαβὼν τὴν ἐξουσίαν καὶ χρῆσάμενος καὶ πατῶν ἐπάνω ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἔχθροῦ· θαρρεῖτε γάρ· οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς οὐ μὴ ἀδικήσῃ (Lk 10,19).

82. *H73Ps* III,7 (262.13-19): Ἐπαγγέλλεται δὴ τοῖς ἰδίοις μαθηταῖς λέγων ἰδοὺ δίδωμι ὑμῖν ἐξουσίαν πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἔχθροῦ καὶ οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς οὐ μὴ ἀδικήσωσιν (Lk 10,19). Ἴρα γὰρ δέδωκεν ἐξουσίαν πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφρων τοιούτων; Γενναῖός τις ἐστὶν καὶ πιστός; Πατησάτω τούτους τοὺς ὄφεις, μάλιστα ἔχιδναν ἢ βασιλίσκον ἢ τι τῶν χαλεπῶν ἐτέρων θηρίων καὶ σκορπίων πατησάτω. Οὐ τοιαῦτα ἡμῖν Χριστὸς χροῖζεται.

83. Vgl. die Beispiele aus Lk 6,29 oder 10,4 und Mt 5,29 in *Prin* IV,3,3 (327.6-13).

Wirken viele der oben erwähnten Zitate als gewohnte Kristallisationspunkte für die Exegese des Origenes, die er immer wieder (und meistens in einem bestimmten Sinne) gebraucht, machen sich dennoch zum Teil auch neue Akzente bemerkbar. Dies ist anscheinend bei der Interpretation einer so beliebten Stelle im Johannesevangelium wie Joh 1,29b der Fall (ἴδε ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, „Seht, das Lamm Gottes, das die Sünde der Welt hinwegnimmt“)⁸⁴. Der Alexandriner hat sich mit ihrer Auslegung im *Johanneskommentar* ziemlich ausführlich befasst⁸⁵; trotzdem enthalten interessanterweise die *Psalmenhomilien* einen exegetischen Nachtrag. Während die *1. Homilie zu Psalm 77* das Thema vom wahren Opfer Christi im Gegensatz zum typologischen Opfer des Alten Testaments bespricht und die *6. Homilie zu Psalm 77* sich auf die *epinoia* Christi als „Sühne“ (ἰλαστήριον) bezieht – beide Male auch als Replik auf die judaisierenden Tendenzen innerhalb der Gemeinde von Cäsarea⁸⁶ –, gibt die *1. Homilie zu Psalm 76* eine Etymologie des Namens Johannes des Täufers an, die bisher nur von einem *Lukas-Fragment* bezeugt wurde. Diese erscheint nicht im *Johanneskommentar*, wo wir sie eigentlich erwarten würden. Zu der dort wie auch in unserer Homilie zu findenden etymologischen Erklärung für den Namen des Vaters Zacharias (im *Johanneskommentar*, „Erinnerung Gottes“ θεοῦ μνήμη; in unserer Homilie, „Der, der sich Gottes erinnert“ ὁ μνημονεύων θεοῦ) gesellt sich in unserer Homilie die Johannes den Täufer betreffende als „derjenige, der zeigt“ (ὁ δεικνύς). Trotz der antiken Vorliebe für Etymologien scheint diese allerdings kein Echo gefunden zu haben und auch beim Alexandriner wird sie sonst nur noch im *Fragment 32* (Rauer 49) zu Lk 1,59 erwähnt⁸⁷. Jedoch heißt es im vorangehenden *Fragment 31* (Rauer 48): „Johannes bedeutet soviel wie ‚Gnade Gottes‘, Zacharias ‚Erinnerung Gottes‘ und Elisabet ‚Schwur meines Gottes‘“⁸⁸. Dies entspricht dem Inhalt der Auslegung, die Origenes auch im 2. Buch des *Johanneskommentars*

84. *H76Ps* I,6 (304.15-16); *H77Ps* I,4 (358.20–359.1); *H77Ps* VI,2 (425.17–426.2). *Biblia Patristica* (Anm. 71), S. 314 weist auf 18 Zitate bzw. Anspielungen hin.

85. Vgl. T. PISCITELLI, *L'esegesi di Gv 1, 29b „Ecco l'agnello di Dio che prende su di sé il peccato del mondo“: Dalla conoscenza del Battista al sacrificio di Cristo*, in PRINZIVALLI (Hg.), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene* (Anm. 24), 483-517.

86. Dazu vgl. A. FÜRST, *Judentum, Judenchristentum und Antijudaismus in den neu entdeckten Psalmenhomilien des Origenes*, in *Adamantius* 20 (2014) 275-286.

87. *FrLc* 32 (RAUER 49, 247): Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐρμηνεύεται Ζαχαρίας μὲν „μνήμη θεοῦ“, Ἰωάννης δὲ ὁ „δεικνύς“, μέμνηται δὲ τις τοῦ ἀπόντος, δεικνύσι δὲ τὸν παρόντα, διὰ τοῦτο οἱ τοῦ παιδὸς γεννητόρες οὐκ ἠνέσχοντο αὐτὸν καλεῖν Ζαχαρίαν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον Ἰωάννην ὀνομάζουσιν ἤθελον, διότι ἤμελλεν οὐχὶ μνημονεύειν θεοῦ ὡς ἀπόντος, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἐκείνον μονονοῦχί τῷ δακτύλῳ δεικνύειν παρόντα καὶ λέγειν ἴδε ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ (Joh 1,29).

88. *FrLc* 31 (RAUER 48, 247): Ἰωάννης μὲν οὖν „χάρις θεοῦ“ ἐρμηνεύεται, Ζαχαρίας δὲ „μνήμη θεοῦ“, Ἐλισάβετ „θεοῦ μου ἕρκος“ (Übersetzung nach: *Origenes. In Lucam Homiliae*.

zu Joh 1,29b vertritt, ohne allerdings die Etymologie zu Johannes im überlieferten Text ausdrücklich anzugeben⁸⁹. Vielleicht hat in der Folgezeit die Beschäftigung mit dem Lukasevangelium im verloren gegangenen Kommentar, wenn nicht in den Homilien, den Alexandriner dazu gebracht, eine weitere Etymologie einzuführen⁹⁰.

Διὰ τοῦτου θέλω εἰπεῖν διὰ τί Ἰωάννης οὐ καλεῖται Ζαχαρίας. Ὁ τοῖνον ἀπόντος θεοῦ θέλων μεμνήσθαι, διὰ τοῦ μεμνήσθαι αὐτοῦ δηλοῖ ὅτι οὐ πάρεστιν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός, τῷ δὲ παρόντι οὐ χρεία ἐστὶ μνήμης τῆς περὶ τοῦ παρόντος· οἶον μέμνημαι τοῦ ἀποδημοῦντος ἀδελφοῦ, μέμνημαι τοῦ ἀπόντος φίλου, οὐ μέμνημαι τοῦ παρόντος, βλέπω γὰρ αὐτόν. Ἐπεὶ οὖν καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης ἔλεγεν· ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἶρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (Joh 1,19) καὶ ἔμελλε δεῖκνύναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸν θεὸν λόγον, διὰ τοῦτο οὐ καλεῖται ὡς οἱ πρότεροι “Ζαχαρίας” καὶ “μνημονεύων θεοῦ”, ἀλλὰ “δεικνύς”⁹¹.

Aus diesem Grund will ich sagen, warum Johannes nicht den Namen Zacharias bekommt. In Wahrheit zeigt derjenige, der sich bei Gottes Abwesenheit an ihn erinnern will, durch seine Erinnerung an ihn, dass Gott ihm nicht gegenwärtig ist. Aber der, dem er gegenwärtig ist, muss sich an seine Anwesenheit nicht erinnern. Ich erinnere mich zum Beispiel eines Bruders, der weggereist ist; ich erinnere mich des Abwesenden, aber ich erinnere mich nicht des Anwesenden: ich sehe ihn ja! Da nun auch Johannes sagte: „Seht, das Lamm Gottes, das die Sünde der Welt hinwegnimmt“ (Joh 1,19) und im Begriff war, den Sohn Gottes, Gott das Wort, zu zeigen, deswegen wird er nicht wie seine Vorfahren Zacharias, „der sich Gottes erinnert“ genannt, sondern „der, der (ihn) zeigt“.

Die *Psalmenhomilien* bestätigen weiterhin die gravierende Rolle johanneischer Stellen nicht nur im allgemeinen für die christologische Lehre der *epinoiai* sondern auch für die origeneische „Theologie des Wassers“, wie sie besonders von Hugo und Karl Rahner erarbeitet wurde⁹². Es sind vor allem

Homiliae zum Lukasevangelium, übers. u. eing. v. H.-J. SIEBEN, II, Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 1992, S. 419).

89. *CIo* II,33,197-198 (90.22–91.1): “Ζαχαρίας” δὲ “μνήμη” εἶναι λέγεται, ἡ δὲ “Ἐλισάβετ” “θεοῦ μου ὄρκος” ἢ “θεοῦ μου ἐβδομάς”. Ἀπὸ θεοῦ δὲ χάρις ἐκ τῆς περὶ θεοῦ “μνήμης” κατὰ τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν “ὄρκον” τὸν περὶ τοῦ πατέρος ἐγεννήθη ὁ Ἰωάννης. Im Apparat (S. 90) gibt Preuschen die Etymologie für Johannes, die wohl im überlieferten Text ausgefallen ist: θεοῦ χάρις.

90. Zum verlorengegangenen *Lukas-Kommentar*, s. NAUTIN, *Origène: Sa vie et son œuvre* (Anm. 11), S. 243.

91. *H76Ps* I,6 (304.12–305.1).

92. Vgl. H. RAHNER, *De Dominici pectoris fonte potavit*, in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 55 (1931) 103-108; ID., „*Flumina de ventre Christi*“: *Die patristische Auslegung von Joh 7,37.38*, in *Biblica* 22 (1941) 269-302, 367-403; K. RAHNER, *E latere Christi: Der Ursprung der Kirche als zweiter Eva aus der Seite Christi des zweiten Adam. Eine typologische Untersuchung über den typologischen Sinn von Joh 19, 34* [1936], in *Sämtliche Werke. 3: Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, bearb. von A.R. BATLOGG – E. FARRUGIA – K.-H. NEUFELD, Zürich – Düsseldorf,

Joh 4,14 und 7,(37-)38, die meistens zusammen zitiert werden und gelegentlich mit 1 Kor 10,4 und anderen alt- und neutestamentlichen Belegen verbunden sind⁹³. Für die 2. wie auch für die 3. *Homilie zu Psalm 73* ist Jesus selbst die Quelle, aus dessen Innerem „Ströme von Wasser fließen (Joh 7,38)⁹⁴, das ins ewige Leben sprudelt (Joh 4,14)“. Doch Origenes betrachtet entsprechend der von ihm bevorzugten Auslegung von Joh 7,38⁹⁵ zusätzlich bald die Apostel, bald die Gläubigen im Allgemeinen als „die Ströme“ bzw. „die Flüsse“ (ποταμοί) geistigen Wassers, die aus der Quelle des Herrn fließen. So weist die 3. *Homilie zu Psalm 76* auf die „Ströme“ der Apostel hin⁹⁶, während die 4. die „Ströme“ der Gerechten miteinbezieht⁹⁷. Auch die Kirche wird einmal in der 6. *Homilie zu Psalm 77* als die „Quelle“ (πηγή) des ewigen Lebens betrachtet⁹⁸. Stehen demnach die beiden möglichen Deutungen

Benziger; Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 1999, 1-84. Ich habe dies Thema im folgenden Aufsatz behandelt: *I due fratelli Rabner e Origene: alle sorgenti dei Padri per una nuova esperienza di Dio e della Chiesa, in Adamantius 25* (2019) 69-96. Zum Motiv des „Brunnens“, das in diesen Zusammenhang gehört, vgl. M. SIMONETTI, *Omelia XIII: Isacco e i pozzi d'Israele*, in E. DAL COVOLO – L. PERRONE (Hgg.), *Mosè ci viene letto nella Chiesa: Lettura delle Omelie di Origene sulla Genesi* (Biblioteca di scienze religiose, 153), Roma, Las, 1999, 127-139.

93. *H73Ps* II,8 (250.15–251.4); *H73Ps* III,1 (252.13–253.3); *H76Ps* III,4 (337.7-10); *H76Ps* IV,5 (349.2-6); *H77Ps* VI,3 (429.13-19); *H77Ps* VII,2 (436.3-9); *H77Ps* VII,2 (437.11-14). Im Verzeichniss von *Biblia Patristica* (wie Anm. 70), 320-321 kommt Joh 4,14 45 Mal vor, während Joh 7,37-38 28 Mal erscheint (*ibid.*, S. 327).

94. *H73Ps* II,8 (250.15–251.2): Σὺ ἔβροξας πηγὴν καὶ χειμάρρου (Ps 73,15a)· κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἱστορίαν, ἔρεϊ ὁ ἀπλοῦστερος ὅτι διέρρηξε πηγὴν ἀπὸ πέτρας, ἥνικα ὁ λαὸς ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου· διέρρηξε πηγὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ Σαμψών, ἥνικα ἀπὸ τῆς σιαγόνος τοῦ ὄνου ἐξῆλθεν ὕδωρ καὶ ἔπιεν (Ri 15,19), καὶ ἄλλα δ' <ἄν> εὐρεθεῖν ἐν ταῖς θείαις γραφαῖς τοιαῦτα. Ἐγὼ δὲ ἓνα ἕκαστον εὐρίσκων ἑπαγγελίαν ἔχοντα ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου μου Ἰησοῦ, ἔρω· ὅτι πηγὴ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥέουσι ὕδατος (Joh 7,38) ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Joh 4,14). Καὶ εἶπομι ἂν ὅτι μᾶλλον τοῦτω ἄρμυζει πνευματικῶς τὸ σὺ διέροξας πηγὴν καὶ χειμάρρου (Ps 73,15a).

95. *H73Ps* III,1 (252.13–253.3): Τίς οὖν ἡ πηγὴ ἣν διέρρηξε καὶ τίνες οἱ χειμάρροι οὓς συνῆξεν ὁ θεός, κατανοητέον. Ἡ μὲν πηγὴ ὁ κύριός μου ἐστίν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός, ἀφ' ἧς πίνομεν. Καὶ χειμάρροι κατεκλύσθησαν (Ps 77,20b) ἐπ' αὐτῆς τῆς πηγῆς· ὅτι οἱ ἱεροὶ καὶ θαυμαστοὶ ἀπόστολοι χειμάρροι κατεκλύσθησαν, ὡς καὶ ἐν τῷ ἑβδομηκοστῷ ἑβδόμῳ ψαλμῷ ἀπὸ τῆς πέτρας τῆς ῥεούσης ὕδατα πολλοὶ χειμάρροι κατεκλύσθησαν (vgl. Ps 77,15-16). Ἦλθεν οὖν ὁ Χριστός οὐρανῶθεν πηγὴ καὶ χειμάρρους δέδωκε πολλούς, τοὺς ἀποστόλους. Καὶ μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο δίδωσι χειμάρρους, ἂν εὖρη ψυχὰς ζηλοῦσας τὸν ἀποστολικὸν βίον· δι' αὐτῶν γὰρ καὶ χειμάρροι ῥέουσι καὶ ποταμοὶ ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Joh 4,14).

96. *H76Ps* III,4 (337.7-10): Τοιοῦτοι ἦσαν πάντες οἱ ἐκλεκτοὶ προφηταί, οἱ θαυμάσιοι ἀπόστολοι. Καὶ ἐπεὶ ποταμοὶ τινες ἐκ κοιλίας αὐτῶν ἦσαν ὕδατος ἐξιόντες εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Joh 7,48; 4,14), ποταμούς ἔχοντες ἐλάουσι καὶ εὐφραίνου τὴν πόλιν τοῦ θεοῦ· τοῦ γὰρ ποταμοῦ τὰ ὁμήματα εὐφραίνουσι τὴν πόλιν τοῦ θεοῦ (Ps 45,5a).

97. *H76Ps* IV,5 (349.2-6): Εἰ δὲ θέλεις καὶ ἄλλως ἰδεῖν πῶς αἱ τρίβου τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν εἰσι τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἴδε μοι τὸν δίκαιον, οὗ ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας ῥέουσιν ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Joh 4,14 und 7,38), καὶ ὅψι ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ἐκεῖνοισι τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ τῇ πηγῇ καὶ τῷ ποταμῷ τρίβου σωτηρίας τοῦ θεοῦ.

98. *H77Ps* VI,3 (429.13-19): Ἐὰν δὲ καὶ ἀναγινώσκων τὸ ποσάκις παρεπίκραναν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ παρόργισαν αὐτὸν ἐν γῇ ἀνδρῶν (Ps 77,40), ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ ὁσάκις ἂν καταλιπὼν τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ἐρημίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἀπέλθῃς, ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ γενόμενος

von Joh 7,38, entweder auf Jesus oder auf den Gläubigen bezogen, bei dem Alexandriner einfach nebeneinander, verteidigt er in der 7. *Homilie zu Psalm 77* ausdrücklich die zweite Interpretation. Diese lässt sich bekanntlich rechtfertigen, wenn man von einer anderen Interpunktion im Text ausgeht: „Wer an mich glaubt – wie die Schrift sagt: aus dessen Innerem werden Ströme von lebendigem Wasser fließen“ (Joh 7,38)⁹⁹.

Ἴνα δὲ νοήσης τί βούλεται ὁ περὶ τούτων λόγος, παραθήσομαι πρότερον τὰς ὀνομασίας τῶν κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν ποταμῶν, δεικνύς ὅτι καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι ἔχουσι ποταμούς, καὶ χρὴ ἡμᾶς πίνειν μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ποταμῶν τῶν ἁγίων, μὴ πίνειν δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων. Ἄκουε οὖν Ἰησοῦ ἐπαγγελλομένου τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς καὶ λέγοντος· ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ – τίνος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἢ “τοῦ ἐμοῦ μαθητοῦ”; – ῥεῦσουσιν (Joh 7,38) πηγὴν ὕδατος ἄλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Joh 4,14)· οὐ μόνον εἰς ποταμὸς, ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείονες ποταμοί¹⁰⁰.

Damit du verstehst, was diese Rede bedeutet, werde ich zunächst die Namen der Ströme nach der Schrift darstellen. Ich werde zeigen, dass auch die Heiligen Ströme haben. Wir müssen aus den Strömen der Heiligen trinken und nicht aus den (ihnen) entgegengesetzten. Höre nun Jesu Versprechen an seine Jünger, da er sagt: „Ströme von lebendigem Wasser werden aus dessen Innerem – was heißt ‚dessen‘ wenn nicht ‚mein Jünger‘? – fließen“ (Joh 7,38), „eine Quelle von Wasser, das ins ewige Leben sprudelt“ (Joh 4,14): nicht nur ein Fluss, sondern mehrere.

VI. FAZIT:

VOM PSALTER ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT UND UMGEKEHRT

Es wären noch andere bedeutende Stellen aus dem Johannesevangelium zu besprechen, vor allem hinsichtlich der christologischen *epinoiai*¹⁰¹, und

παραπικραίνεις τὸν θεόν. Ὅσάκις ἐὰν πηγῆς ὕδατος ἄλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Joh 4,14) παρούσης σοι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ῥαθυμῶν περὶ τὰς συνάξεις καὶ ἀμελῶν περὶ τοῦ ποτισθῆναι, ἀπέλθης ἐπὶ τὴν ἀνυδρον, καὶ σὺ παραπικραίνεις ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ γινόμενος τὸν θεόν.

99. Vgl. RAHNER, „*Flumina de ventre Christi*“: *Die patristische Auslegung von Joh 7,37.38* (Anm. 92), S. 269-271.

100. *H77Ps* VII,2 (436.3-9). Vgl. auch *ibid.* (437.11-14): Ὡσπερ οὖν τὴν πόλιν Χριστὸς ποταμὸς εὐφραίνει καὶ ποταμοὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐξέρχονται, πηγῆς ὕδατος ἄλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Joh 4,24), οὕτως ἐναντίοι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ λόγοι καὶ αὐτοὶ εἰσι ποταμοί, ἀλλὰ ποταμοὶ ἐχθροὶ τῷ ποταμῷ τοῦ θεοῦ.

101. Origenes gebraucht z.B. Joh 6,51, um die *epinoia* des Logos als „lebendiges Brot“ für seine Rede von der geistigen Nahrung ins Spiel zu bringen. Vgl. *H15Ps* I,9 (87.4-10); *H36Ps* I,2 (119.1-3); *H77Ps* II,5 (375.25-28); *H77Ps* IV,3 (392.6-11); IV,6 (397.12-15); IV,10 (404.9-15). Aber die Belegstelle überhaupt für die origeneische Lehre der *epinoiai* ist wohl Joh 14,6. Das Zitat kommt in den folgenden Homilien vor: *H15Ps* II,10 (112.2-8); *H36Ps* I,4 (123.10-13); *H36Ps* II,1 (127.11-13); *H76Ps* II,5 (320.3-4); *H76Ps* IV,5 (348.1-2); *H77Ps* II,4 (374.1-2); *H77Ps* VI,2 (425.20-22). Ferner ist auch die Verwendung von Joh 8,39 nennenswert; vgl. *H36Ps* IV,3 (169.19-23); *H67Ps* II,7 (221.2-8); *H76Ps* II,7 (325.6-10); *H77Ps* II,2 (369.13-17).

dazu auch aus dem *Corpus Paulinum*, um die Spannweite der neutestamentlichen Zitate richtig zu ermessen. Trotzdem hoffe ich gezeigt zu haben, wie auch die *Psalmenhomilien* dazu beitragen können, Origenes als Interpreten des Neuen Testaments zu beleuchten. Das exegetische Vorgehen, den der Alexandriner am Psalter großartig vollzieht, erweist sich somit als übergreifende Auslegung im Zeichen einer grundsätzlichen Intertextualität. Vom Prinzip der Einheit beider Testamente der christlichen Bibel und der damit verbundenen Auslegung im geistigen Sinne ausgehend, entfaltet der Prediger alle Möglichkeiten der „Harmonik“, die nach seinen Vorstellungen der Heiligen Schrift innewohnt. Bei der dynamischen Beziehung, die sich dadurch zwischen den beiden Testamenten entwickelt, entstehen auf beiden Seiten neue Akzente und Perspektiven. Ohne die bestehenden Unterschiede ganz zu verwischen, wird demnach der Psalter in den Prozess einer weitgehenden Inanspruchnahme durch das Evangelium hineingezogen. Umgekehrt ermöglicht die Bezugnahme auf den Psalter in Verbindung mit den Stellen aus den Evangelien eine bereichernde Lektüre der Geschichte Jesu, die besonders die Dramatik seiner Passion neu erhellt. Die neutestamentlichen Zitatenumstellungen, die am Horizont des Psalters bei unserer Untersuchung erschienen sind, beweisen, wenn auch dieses weit gedehnt und flexibel anwendbar erscheint, erneut, wie sich der Alexandriner an einem Netz von Koordinaten orientiert. Diese Koordinaten bilden das tragende Gerüst, auf dessen Stützen er, von Grund auf ein Theologe der Schrift, seine theologisch-spirituelle Exegese vollbringt.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT AND RHETORICAL TECHNIQUE IN THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA'S COMMENTARIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

I. INTRODUCTION

Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428) considered the way in which Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles dealt with the Scriptures as an authoritative model to guide the interpretation of the Old Testament. Although few, if any, early Christian exegetes would disagree with that, the differences among them indicate that it would merely be the beginning of the discussion and surely not the end. The model, comprising various passages in the New Testament, is malleable because those passages need interpretation themselves. It is therefore instructive to explore how Theodore commented on Paul's use of the Old Testament and how Theodore himself employed the Old Testament in his commentaries on the Pauline epistles.

Theodore's ten commentaries on the minor epistles (CPG 3845) may have been written during the second decade of the fifth century¹. They survive in Greek fragments, in fragments of a Syriac translation, and in a complete Latin translation². There are Greek fragments from his commentaries on the four major epistles, of which the commentary on Romans (CPG 3846) and on Hebrews (CPG 3848) certainly were written before the commentaries on the minor epistles. This may also be the case for the commentaries on 1 and 2 Corinthians (CPG 3847)³. It should be noted that for the sake

1. H.B. SWETE (ed.), *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Pauli commentarii: The Latin Version with the Greek Fragments*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, vol. 1, 1880, vol. 2: 1882, vol. 1, pp. LXI-LXIII.

2. For the Latin and the Greek, see SWETE, *Commentarii* (n. 1) or the slightly updated edition with English translation: Theodore of Mopsuestia, *The Commentaries on the Minor Epistles of Paul*, transl. R.A. GREER (Writings from the Greco-Roman World, 26), Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2010. An edition of a part of the Syriac fragments with English translation is being prepared by E. FIORI – M. GOLDBERG.

3. For the text of the commentaries on the major epistles, see K. STAAB (ed.), *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche: Aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben*

of convenience I will follow Theodore's presumption that Paul was the author of all fourteen letters traditionally attributed to the apostle.

Theodore's comments usually consist of pertinent observations on the meaning of particular words and phrases, and often contain a paraphrase. His propensity for repetition is balanced by the originality of his insights. Throughout the commentaries, he keeps a clear eye for the sequence (*ἀκολουθία*) of thought in the epistle at hand. Only here and there does Theodore allow himself to rise above the text in order to provide a broader exegetical and theological outlook, for instance in the three sections Ulrich Wickert described as conveying the *Grundkonzeption* of Theodore's theology⁴. His view on the nature of commentaries – that is, elucidation of the plain sense – explains his focus on the sequence and the cohesion of the argument, without being distracted by extensive documentation of parallel biblical passages or by lengthy excursions. He usually restricts himself to the text at hand and appeals only to other biblical texts if that is useful for his goal. There are, for instance, only two cases in the surviving material where Theodore refers to an example from Old Testament history which is not elicited by the biblical text, and has at best a tangential relation to the issue at hand. These are the comments on 1 Tim 3,4-5 and Tit 1,6, texts dealing with the qualifications of bishops and claiming that a good bishop has to be a good household manager and should keep his children submissive. Here Theodore invokes the example of Samuel, whose corrupt children did not make Samuel less of a priest (1 Sam 8,3), in order to point out that the qualifications put forward by the apostle pertain to the care and diligence of the father, not to the actual choice of the children⁵. The commentaries on the Pastoral epistles and on Philemon show Theodore's keen interest in Christian behaviour and the ecclesiastical life of his own time. Perhaps the nuances he brings to the fore here, legitimated by an example from biblical history, were evoked by his pastoral experience as a bishop.

There are some instances in the surviving material where Theodore takes Paul's use of the Old Testament for granted and pays no particular attention to it⁶. In one case, at 1 Tim 5,18 with the quotation of Deut 25,4

(Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, 15), Münster, Aschendorff, 1984 (1933), pp. 113-212. For the relative date of composition, see SWETE, *Commentarii* (n. 1), p. LXIII.

4. Namely in *Rom.* 8,19, in *Eph.* 1,10, and in *Col.* 1,16. U. WICKERT, *Studien zu den Pauluskomentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia als Beitrag zum Verständnis der antiochenischen Theologie* (BZNW, 27), Berlin, Töpelmann, 1962, p. 6.

5. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *1 Tim.* 3,4-5; in *Tit.* 1,6.

6. That is for instance the case with Deut 21,23 in Gal 3,13 (on the curse of the crucified one) and Exod 20,5 (or Deut 5,16, the commandment to honour one's parents) in Eph 6,1-4. He does not note the use of Zech 8,16 and Ps 4,5 in Eph 4,25-26, but these quotations are

which forbids to muzzle the ox, Theodore only remarks that Paul wished to provide a testimony for what he had said. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of the source material we cannot know what Theodore had to say about the exegetically more interesting use of the same Mosaic precept in 1 Cor 9,9⁷.

More important is what Theodore has to say about Paul's seemingly allegorical explanations and his use of testimonies from the Old Testament. Also, attention will be paid to Theodore's method of discerning peculiarities of language.

II. SYNCRISIS

The most widely known part of Theodore's commentaries on the epistles of Paul is his commentary on Gal 4,21-31, where he deals with Paul's use of the term ἀλληγορεῖν (ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα, Gal 4,24)⁸. In order to show that Paul did not employ allegorical interpretation in the usual sense but did something different, Theodore points out that Paul maintained the history and the facts. Paul does not say that Hagar and Jerusalem are one and the same, but that there is a correspondence (συστοιχεῖ, Gal 4,25). The word "just as" (ὡσπερ, Gal 4,29) implies a comparison (*similitudo*), but that makes only sense if the things compared continue to exist. Moreover, when he says τότε (4,29) he refers to a certain time in history, namely that of Ishmael and Isaac. The history and the facts are crucial for Paul's argument:

And in this passage it is on the basis of events that actually took place and of those traditions acknowledged by the Jews as true that he strives to prove his own claim ... that Christ's dispensation is greater than that of the law and that our righteousness should be perceived as far more excellent than that found in the law.

Theodore concludes: "He called allegory the comparison (σύγκρισις, *comparatio*) on the basis of juxtaposition (παράθεσις) of events that had already taken place and present circumstances". Although Paul says that he is allegorizing, he is in fact making a comparison⁹.

not marked as such by the biblical author. See Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Gal.* 3.13b-14; in *Eph.* 6.1-4; in *1 Tim.* 5.18; in *Eph.* 4.25-26.

7. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *1 Tim.* 5.18. At in *1 Tim.* 5.19 Theodore refers to the content of Deut 19,15, but he does not say that it was taken from the law.

8. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Gal.* 4.21-31.

9. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Gal.* 4.24a (transl. GREER, *The Commentaries* [n. 2], pp. 117, 121, adapted).

The term σύγκρισις was used for a rhetorical technique that is discussed in many of the rhetorical handbooks and exercises. In the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon (circa first century CE) syncrisis is defined as a discourse setting the better or the worse side by side¹⁰. Aphthonius of Antioch, just as Theodore a pupil of Libanius, provides a slightly expanded definition: “Syncrisis is a comparative discourse on the basis of juxtaposition (παράθεσις), bringing together what is greater together with what is set parallel with it”¹¹. Aphthonius’ definition comes very close to Theodore’s description of Paul’s technique regarding both the goal of Paul’s discourse (namely to show relative greatness) and the actual definition of syncrisis (παράθεσις of two entities in a comparative discourse).

The interpretation of Paul’s ἀλληγορία as syncrisis is more than an ad hoc argument aimed at brushing aside the inconvenient terminology of the apostle. It is actually embedded in a theology of the two testaments, of which Theodore provides a short exposition accompanied by the remark that he had demonstrated it more clearly in his commentary on Hebrews¹². In the surviving work of Theodore, the most comprehensive exposition of his theology of the two testaments in relation to the exegesis of the Old Testament in light of the New Testament can be found in the introduction to the commentary on Jonah. There he argues that the history in the Old and the New Testament can be compared because they are guided by one God. Old and New Testament relate to each other as promise and reality or truth (ἀλήθεια).

[God] made a great number of provisions during the old covenant in such a way that the events both provided the people of the time with the greatest benefit and also contained an indication of the things that would occur later. It would also appear that these latter would greatly surpass the former. In this way the events in older times were found to be a kind of model of the later events, containing a kind of representation of them. They were also useful at the time, but the events themselves made clear how far the earlier events were inferior¹³.

This is syncrisis embedded in history-of-salvation theology, which owes much to the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews. It is therefore not

10. Aelius Theon, *Προγυμνάσματα* 10 (112).

11. Aphthonius of Antioch, *Προγυμνάσματα* 10.1.

12. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Gal.* 4.24a.

13. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Ionam, argumentum*. H.N. SPRENGER, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in XII Prophetas* (Göttinger Orientforschungen, 5/1), Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1977. For the translation I have consulted Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, transl. R.C. HILL (The Fathers of the Church, 108), Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 2004, p. 186.

surprising that in the commentary on Galatians Theodore refers back to his commentary on Hebrews for a clearer exposition of his syncrisis-shaped theology.

The commentary on Galatians was not the first text where Theodore addressed Paul's use of ἀλληγορία-terminology. In fact, Theodore's first commentary, that on the Psalms, probably discussed it extensively, as can be inferred from what is presupposed by the surviving part of the introduction of the commentary on Psalm 118(119)¹⁴. The surviving text begins with a detailed exegetical discussion of Eph 5,22-33. One can make the case that in the now lost text prior to the frayed beginning of the fragment, Theodore discussed the exegesis of (at least) three texts: Gal 4,21-31; 1 Cor 10,1-13; Eph 5,22-33. There are two reasons to include 1 Corinthians 10. First, the *Introduction to the Divine Scriptures* of a certain author with the name Adrian (probably fifth century), which in all likelihood is dependent on some of Theodore's writings including his *Expositio in Psalmos*, mentions 1 Cor 10,1-4 as an example of syncrisis alongside Galatians 4 and Ephesians 5¹⁵. (Adrian's definition of syncrisis is "whenever [Scripture] wishes to liken present realities with past events on the basis of their similarities"¹⁶.) Secondly, Išo'dad of Merv's commentary on the Psalms (ninth century), which is mainly dependent on Theodore's commentary, contains in its introduction a chapter on allegorical interpretation with an extensive discussion of 1 Cor 10,1-13 that is at least heavily inspired by Theodore¹⁷. It is therefore not too speculative to surmise that Theodore himself brought these three texts together as examples of syncrisis over against allegory.

14. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Expositio in Psalmos* 118, *argumentum*. L. VAN ROMPAY (ed.), *Théodore de Mopsueste: Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138–148)* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 435-436; Scriptorum Syri, 189-190), Leuven, Peeters, 1982; German translation in F. THOME, *Historia contra Mythos: Die Schriftauslegung Diodors von Tarsus und Theodors von Mopsuestia im Widerstreit zu Kaiser Julians und Salustius' allegorischem Mythenverständnis* (Hereditas, 24), Bonn, Borengässer, 2004, pp. 124-149.

15. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 73.3 (recension 2). P.W. MARTENS (ed.), *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures: An Antiochene Handbook for Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford Early Christian Texts), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017.

16. Translation of MARTENS, *Adrian's Introduction* (n. 15), p. 239 (Martens has "it" instead of "Scripture").

17. See C. HOOGERWERF, *Historische versus allegorische uitleg in de inleiding van Išo'dad van Merv commentaar op de Psalmen: Vertaling en bronkritische analyse*, in *NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion* 73 (2019) 283-297; C. VAN DEN EYNDE (ed.), *Commentaire d' Išo'dad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament. VI: Psaumes* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 433-434; Scriptorum Syri, 185-186), Leuven, Peeters, 1981.

Unfortunately, there is not more left of Theodore's exegesis of 1 Cor 10,1-13 than a handful of short excerpts from various catena manuscripts¹⁸. The following parts of these excerpts show that Theodore strictly separated past and present in order to compare them:

The sea is a model (τύπος) of baptism with water, the cloud of baptism with the Spirit. Moses is a model for the Lord himself as the originator of the archetypal baptism, just as Christ is originator of the real one. ... [Paul] does not mean that a rock really followed them, on the contrary, he means that the power of Christ followed them. ... He said that the manna and the drink were spiritual, because it was given them by virtue of the activity of the holy Spirit. ... And it was following, since water, having flown once, followed them in the desert so that they never were in need of drinking water when the places were waterless. The phrase "the rock was Christ", that is to say: what the rock was for them, that is Christ for us. ... The things that happened to them are examples that can educate us.

These comments raise several questions that cannot be fully attributed to problems of the textual transmission, because Išo'dad of Merv notes that Theodore made seemingly conflicting comments on this passage¹⁹. In any case, whereas it is Paul's concern to blur the distinction between the history of the Israelites and the situation of the church, it is Theodore's concern to show that Paul is not interpreting allegorically (a is b) but that he is making a comparison (a is just as b).

Eph 5,32 seems to call for a spiritual interpretation of the marriage of the first humans. Theodore dealt with this passage (at least) thrice: in the commentaries on, in probable chronological order, the Psalms, the Gospel of John, and the minor epistles of Paul²⁰. In the latter commentary Theodore interprets the comparison (*similitudo*) of marriage in the first creation with

18. STAAB (ed.), *Pauluskommentare* (n. 3), pp. 185-186. Note that Staab erroneously included a text that is actually from Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaest. in Ex.* 27-28 (185.22-186.5). The error of attribution is already present in manuscript Athous Pantocrator 28, f. 64r. See also HOOGERWERF, *Historische versus allegorische uitleg* (n. 17), pp. 293-295. Išo'dad of Merv may offer some more information in his commentary on 1 Corinthians. He remarks that Theodore turns against the allegorists here, but also that there are different interpretations in his writings regarding what exactly followed the Israelites. See M.D. GIBSON (ed. and transl.), *The Commentaries of Išo'dad of Merv, Bishop of Ḥadathā (c. 850 A.D.) in Syriac and English*. Vol. 5: *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle* (Horae Semiticae, 11), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1916, Syriac text pp. 52-53, transl. pp. 34-35.

19. See the previous note. I do not think Theodore's known statements are irreconcilable.

20. I have discussed Theodore's comments on Eph 5,31-32 more extensively in C. HOOGERWERF, *Origen, "Destroyer of the Holy Scriptures"? Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia on Ephesians 5,31-32*, in B. BITTON-ASHKELONY et al. (eds.), *Origeniana Duodecima: Origen's Legacy in the Holy Land – A Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem. Proceedings of the 12th International Origen Congress, Jerusalem, 25-29 June, 2017* (BETL, 302), Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT, Peters, 2019, 741-752.

marriage in the new creation as an argumentation strategy reinforcing the instruction that wives should be subject to their husbands, and that husbands should love their wives. Theodore underlines that Paul “persists” in including the example of Christ and the church, that he “sticks to it” “throughout” the passage, and “desires to show the resemblance (*similitudo*)” it has to the case at hand. In other words, Christ and the church do not emerge suddenly in 5,32 but function as an instructive example from the beginning of the passage. When Paul says, after quoting Gen 2,24, “this is a great mystery”, he does not refer to the union of wives and husbands. Precisely to prevent that misunderstanding Paul adds “I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5,32). In other words, Theodore argues that Paul intended to expand the comparison between natural and mystical marriage that was already consistently integrated into his argument. The saying from Scripture about marriage (Gen 2,24) forms the basis of this elaboration. He explains that “what was said in the beginning of creation ... concerning wives and husbands has been accomplished more mystically (*μυστικώτερον*) in Christ and the church”. Consequently, that a man leaves his parents to be joined to his wife can, on the level of the mystery of Christ and the church, be compared to separation of this world and joining Christ. Moreover, that the man and the woman become one flesh means on the level of the mystery of Christ and the church that the latter becomes like Christ with respect to immortality²¹. Theodore goes beyond what is explicitly stated in the text, but he believes that the elaboration of the comparison is called for by Paul himself.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is replete with syncretical passages, not only according to, for example, Theodore’s fellow student and colleague Chrysostom but also according to modern research²². How Theodore dealt with these cannot be fully explored here, but his comments on Hebrews 7 are worth a closer look. The conclusions about the character of Melchizedek drawn by the author of the epistle may be in tension with a sober reading of Genesis 14. The preserved fragment from Theodore’s commentary deals with that by invoking another syncretism further on in Hebrews, namely that of the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8–9). Theodore argues that the statement that the way to the most holy place behind the curtain was not disclosed (Hebr 8,9) is not about the nature of the place, but that

21. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Eph.* 5.22-33.

22. M.W. MARTIN – J.A. WHITLARK, *The Encomiastic Topics of Syncretism as the Key to the Structure and Argument of Hebrews*, in *NTS* 57 (2011) 415-439, especially n. 22; J.H. NEYREY, *Syncretism and Encomium: Reading Hebrews through Greek Rhetoric*, in *CBQ* 82 (2020) 276-299.

it concerns an accidental aspect of the place that happens to be so due to its location, furniture, usage, and consecration²³. The accidental aspect of inaccessibility is nevertheless a symbol of the heavenly things (Hebr 8,5). In the same way the author of Hebrews does not speak of Melchizedek's natural characteristics, but of what happens to be (not) mentioned in the biblical story. Just as cultic use of a place is not the same as the nature of that place, so what happens to be recorded in Scripture about someone is not the same as someone's actual nature. With that move Theodore has paved the way for a syncritical explanation: "Here [in the case of Christ] it is about reality (ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων), but there [in the case of Melchizedek] about the story. ... To Him [Christ] pertains the truth of the reality, to that one [Melchizedek] ... the literary form of the story"²⁴.

III. TESTIMONY

In one of the fragments of the commentary on Romans, Theodore devotes explicit attention to Paul's way of employing quotations from Scripture. When Paul quotes Ps 13(14),1-3, Theodore comments:

He did not use this testimony (μαρτυρία) because it was spoken prophetically, but because it was suitable for what was being argued, for David spoke in these words in a general way of people who have made missteps. Indeed, we still do the same today when we make use of testimonies in ecclesiastical discourses because they, in light of the thought they contain, are suitable for what we want to say. For David does not speak about all humans in that Psalm; that is clear from what it says: "Will they not learn, all those who practice lawlessness, those who eat up my people when they eat bread?" (Ps 13[14],4). Whom would he have mentioned as belonging to God if he had just declared that all humans had declined into the worst²⁵?

Although Theodore does not refer to general rhetorical practice but to ecclesiastical discourses or disputes, the practice he describes can be related to the type of argument Quintilian calls *auctoritas* or κρίσις (judgement), which is one kind of *testimonium*. It is an argument in the form of a saying of wisdom from folklore or poetry, which is all the more convincing because it is not adapted to the particular cases in which it is used, but must be

23. Perhaps Theodore derived this distinction from Aristotelian thinking, see C. SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der antiochenischen Exegese* (Theopaneia, 23), Köln – Bonn, Peter Hanstein, 1974, pp. 152-155.

24. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Heb.* 7.3.

25. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Rom.* 3.12.

applied to it by the rhetorician²⁶. Aphthonius of Antioch, who just as Theodore studied with Libanius, called the same discourse section μαρτυρία παλαιῶν, testimony of the ancients²⁷. Just as most of his predecessors in the genre of rhetorical textbooks (προγυμνάσματα), Aphthonius mentions what he calls the testimony of the ancients as a section of the discourse types chreia and maxim²⁸. In ecclesiastical rhetoric the testimony of the ancients became virtually replaced by a new source of authority, the testimony of the Scriptures. It is to this practice that Theodore appeals in order to elucidate his view on Paul's use of citations from the Old Testament.

Theodore describes Paul's use of ancient testimony and authority as something that is suitable for the apostle's purpose. Yet, the use of the authority of Scripture gives rise to problems that do not play a role in a general Greco-Roman context. Whereas Quintilian can assume that what ancient authorities say is not adapted to the particular case at hand and that this unrelatedness makes the testimony persuasive, Theodore has to reckon with the assumption that the New Testament has a prophetic relation to the Old, an issue that was close to his heart due to the perceived danger of allegorical interpretation. It is for that reason that Theodore underlines that Paul does not employ the testimony "prophetically". To prove that, Theodore points out that Paul only quotes the general words of David, which harmonize with his argument, and leaves out the words in the Psalm that show that David is not speaking about all people. Thus, Theodore has to admit that Paul's intention differs from that of the Psalm and that David's intention was clearly not to testify to the situation Paul is addressing. He defends that with a reference to the common practice in the church. The problem of the intention of David differing from Paul's is not present in the case of the quotation from Psalm 50(51) earlier in Romans 3 (Ps 50[51],4 in Rom 3,4) because there David is, in Theodore's view, speaking of the character of the Jews in general. Theodore explains in the commentary on the Psalm that Paul confirms the intention of David²⁹.

26. Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.11.36-37. Compare H. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 42008, pp. 234-235. See also the divine *testimonia* like oracles and omens, discussed in Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.7.35-36.

27. R.F. HOCK – E.N. O'NEILL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*. Vol. 1: *The Progymnasmata* (Texts and Translations, 27; Graeco-Roman Religion Series, 9), Atlanta, GA, Scholars Press, 1986, p. 217.

28. Aphthonius of Antioch, *Προγυμνάσματα* 3.3; 4.3. See for other examples of the genre e.g. G.A. KENNEDY, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Writings of the Greco-Roman World, 10), Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

29. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Expositio in Psalmos* 50, *argumentum*. Edition: R. DEVREESE (ed.), *Le commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les psaumes (I-LXXX)* (Studi e testi, 93),

However, in the case of the quotation from Ps 13(14),1-3 the situation is different. In his commentary on that Psalm Theodore addresses the problem similarly, but more elaborately than in the commentary on Romans. *Quid nos ad haec adferemus?* he asks. The answer is that Paul adopted the testimony because it was applicable to the Jews of his time and very suitable to his case, just as it is the habit of Theodore's own time to use testimonies as proof for situations that possess a close analogy. Theodore disparages those who are ignorant of this apostolic practice and who consequently think that the Psalm is a prophecy about the situation Paul addressed³⁰.

Thus, when Paul aligns himself with the supposed intention of David, that fact can serve as a confirmation of David's intention, but when Paul deviates from it he is using the Psalm not as a prophecy but as a testimony that may differ from the original intention. It may seem that Theodore's evaluation of Paul's use of these Psalm quotations is somewhat arbitrary within the same passage, but his overarching concern is to give no space to allegorical interpretation of the Psalms.

If we look at another cluster in Romans, 9,24–10,21, we see again that these different approaches stand side by side. At Rom 9,25-26 Theodore remarks that Paul does not use Hos 2,25 and 2,1 (and the following testimonies from Isaiah) as a prophecy of the salvation of the Gentiles. That would be incorrect, because Hosea speaks of the Jews. Rather, Paul employs the testimony to say something about God who has no regard of genealogical rights³¹. A couple of sentences further on in the epistle, at Rom 9,32-33, Theodore does not mention the non-prophetic character of the testimony from Isaiah (Isa 28,16; 8,14) because its sense is congruent with Paul's thought. The quotation from the prophet adds importance to the theme of faith³². At Rom 10,14-15 and 10,18 (quotations from Isa 52,7 and Ps 18,5) Theodore again rejects that these texts were written with a view to the apostles. He insists that they are quoted because they harmonize with the current circumstances. In between, at Rom 10,16-17, the quotation of Isa 53,1 serves as a confirmation of Paul's point: what the apostle says about the scarcity of belief is not something new³³.

Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1939. Reprint with English translation: Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Psalms 1–81*, transl. R.C. HILL (Writings from the Greco-Roman World, 5), Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.

30. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Ps.* 13.7. Theodore apparently used a Psalms manuscript in which the whole catena of Rom 3,10-18 belonged to Psalm 13(14), as he comments on the whole cluster without acknowledging any textual problem.

31. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Rom.* 9.25-26.

32. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Rom.* 9.32-33.

33. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Rom.* 10.14-15; 10.16-17; 10.18.

The observation that Paul does not employ a particular testimony as a prophecy, is a recurring refrain in the commentaries on the epistles. There are two other examples from the minor epistles. The first is interesting because it is associated with the syncrisis of Hagar and Sarah with the law and the Jerusalem above, discussed in the previous section. In Gal 4,27 Paul employs a *scripturale testimonium* from Isa 54,1. Theodore immediately comments that Paul did not consider this saying to be a prophecy of the resurrection. “[Paul] used the testimony because of the word ‘barren’”. He took the “barren one” who should sing of joy as Sarah, in the position of the second testament. Many Christians who have died (that is, the “barren” situation) will rise again and so there will be “many sons” in comparison to the single nation under the testament of the law³⁴. Thus, according to Theodore, Paul connected Sarah’s natural barrenness with Isaiah’s barren one who surprisingly would bring forth numerous offspring. He subsequently used it as a testimony to strengthen his argument, but not because it was a prophecy of the resurrection. The saying was not written for the situation, but contains an idea that is nevertheless applicable to the situation at hand. This is in line with the function of the testimony of the ancients in rhetorical practice. The second example from the minor epistles is the last quotation from the Psalms within this corpus. At Eph 4,8 Theodore notes the following about the quotation of Ps 67(68),19: “This can indeed be located in a Psalm, but Paul uses this testimony not as if it was spoken prophetically but as we usually employ testimonies from Scripture when we speak in the church”³⁵.

As a final note, one should not forget that Theodore also held that the prophets (including David) sometimes spoke of the New Testament situation. But in the surviving material of the commentaries on the epistles of Paul there is hardly any straightforward example of that; the fragments on Hebrews have virtually nothing to offer about Theodore’s direct christological interpretation of Psalms 2, 8, 45, and 110. There are some examples of a more indirect nature. In the comments on Rom 14,10-11 and Hebr 1,12 Theodore argues that Paul’s application of respectively the testimonies from Isaiah 45 and Ps 101(102),26-28 to Christ, which serve as confirmation of his argument, is possible if one assumes that the Old Testament speaks about the common divine nature and not about God the Father as separate of God the Son³⁶. Regarding the promise to Abraham that all people would

34. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Gal.* 4.27.

35. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Eph.* 4.8.

36. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Rom.* 14.10-11; *in Heb.* 1.12.

be blessed in him (Gen 12,3; 18,18; Gal 3,8) Theodore naturally accepts Paul's statement that it was fulfilled in Christ. But he feels the need to carefully qualify Paul's singular interpretation of "seed" (Gal 3,16). This interpretation is justified because the promise is fulfilled in Christ and the believers by the very facts (*ipsis rebus*, ἐπ' αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων). It is fulfilled absolutely (ἀπλῶς), accurately (ἀκριβῶς), and properly (κυρίως) in the case of Christ because he was a natural descendant of Abraham, but by faith in him believers also become blessed descendants of Abraham. It is in Paul's interest to say that "seed" is spoken of "as of one" because he wishes to show that the blessing is acquired by faith alone, but that does not mean that Paul disputed the general interpretation of "seed". If one looks at the facts regarding Christ and the blessing of the Spirit that is received by those who believe in him, the "seed" can also be interpreted "as of many", because many understand themselves through Christ as children of Abraham³⁷. Thus, Paul can interpret "seed" as singular because that corresponds partly to how the fulfilment has become reality.

IV. BIBLICAL IDIOM

During the whole of his career of writing commentaries, Theodore benefited from his compilation of peculiarities (*ιδιώματα*) of the biblical language in the preface of his *Expositio in Psalmos*. With the attention to biblical idiom, Theodore, other Antiochenes, but also for instance Jerome and Augustine participated in an isagogic topos of rhetorical criticism in the Greco-Roman world. One clear example is περὶ τῶν Θουκυδίδου ιδιωμάτων of the historian and rhetorician Dionysius of Halicarnassus in which he discusses the peculiarities of the literary style of Thucydides³⁸. Striking parallels to Dionysius' remarks about the goal and the composition of that work of him can be found in the previously mentioned work by Adrian, *Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, which is relevant with regard to Theodore because it shows a great familiarity with Theodore and is dependent on the latter's *Expositio in Psalmos*³⁹. Another source for the lost discussion of idiom in Theodore's introduction of his commentary on the Psalms is the commentary of Išo'dad of Merv whose introduction contains a chapter

37. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Gal.* 3.15-18.

38. SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen* (n. 23), pp. 128-129; MARTENS, *Adrian's Introduction* (n. 15), pp. 31-33.

39. MARTENS, *Adrian's Introduction* (n. 15), pp. 15-19, 31-33.

on idiom⁴⁰. Furthermore, Theodore's own introduction to the commentary on Psalm 118(119) contains a discussion of the peculiarities of biblical metaphors⁴¹. Here it becomes clear that his concern is not only the understanding of the sometimes obscure language of the Greek Old Testament as a translation from the Hebrew language, but also to eliminate the need for allegorical interpretation, which sought legitimation precisely in unintelligible texts⁴².

Often the recurring explanation of a particular word or phrase with appeal to similar parallels leads one to suspect that Theodore produced such comments from his compilation of biblical idiom. The first example in the surviving material on Romans may serve as an illustration. When he comments on Rom 2,29, he explains that ἐν πνεύματι does not refer to the holy Spirit, but to the intention or will (προαίρεσις) of the person involved. Num 14,23-24 and Hos 4,12 count as proof⁴³. The same exegesis is found at Ps 50,12b (51,10) with a reference to Num 14,24, and at Hos 12,1(2) with a reference to Hos 4,12, Ps 50,12 (51,10), and Num 14,24⁴⁴. It is probably no coincidence that Adrian's *Introduction* presents the same interpretation as a lexical ἰδιῶμα with references to a range of biblical texts, including the ones cited above (and with the same textual variant as Theodore in the *Expositio in Psalmos*)⁴⁵.

Most of the appearances of texts from the Old Testament in Theodore's commentaries on the epistles of Paul not covered in the sections above fall into the category of parallels for a certain biblical idiom, although it should be noted that New Testament texts can serve this purpose too. The biblical idiom for which Old Testament texts are employed in the commentaries on the epistles of Paul are the following.

An example of a lexical ἰδιῶμα can be found at Gal 1,4-5. Here Theodore's goal is to forestall a Manichaean interpretation of "the present evil age (αἰῶν)". He denies that Paul is speaking of an independent evil substance and points to the biblical idiom in which αἰῶν means a time period, either short or long. For the first option he offers Ps 89(90),8 as an example,

40. See VAN DEN EYNDE, *Commentaire* (n. 17), transl. pp. 18-21; HOOGERWERF, *Historische versus allegorische uitleg* (n. 17), pp. 290-291.

41. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Ps.* 118, *argumentum*, Syriac fragment II.2.

42. See for a discussion of the Antiochenes' use of the category of peculiarities of style in relation to the Septuagint, SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen* (n. 23), pp. 123-138; and R.B. TER HAAR ROMENY, *A Syrian in Greek Dress: The Use of Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac Biblical Texts in Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 6), Leuven, Peeters, 1997, pp. 135-138.

43. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Rom.* 2.29.

44. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Ps.* 50(51).12b; in *Oseam* 12.1.

45. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 59-59.1.

where *αἰών* stands for the human life span⁴⁶. Adrian offers a corresponding passage where he notes three meanings of *αἰών*: the span of life, the passing of time, or perpetuity and endlessness. He does not cite the Psalm that Theodore cites at Gal 1,4-5 but among other texts a couple of Psalms where Theodore in his commentary makes similar comments⁴⁷.

At Eph 3,18-19a Theodore employs Ps 15(16),11 to show that “to know” (*γινῶναι*) and “to comprehend” (*καταλαβέσθαι*) mean “to enjoy” (*ἀπολαύσαι*), so that Paul is praying that the Ephesians may enjoy the great gift of God together with the saints⁴⁸. The same Psalm is used in the same way in the commentaries on Ps 24(25),4 and on Hos 6,1-3, and is itself commented on in the same vein⁴⁹. There is a clear literary relationship between Theodore’s comment and Adrian’s description of this lexical *ἰδίωμα*:

Theodore, <i>in Eph.</i> 3.18-19a	Adrian, <i>Εἰσαγωγή</i> 19.3 ⁵⁰
τὸ γινῶναι ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀπολαύσαι λέγει· ἐπὶ πραγμάτων εἰπὼν τὴν γινῶσιν, ὡς ἐν τῷ ψαλμῷ τὸ ἐγνώρισάς μοι ὁδοὺς ζωῆς· ...· ἀντὶ τοῦ ‘ἐν ἀπολαύσει με τῆς ζωῆς κατέστησας’.	τὸ δὲ γινῶναι· ὡς τὸ, ‘ἐγνώρισάς μοι ὁδοὺς <ζωῆς>’, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀπολαύσαι με τῆς ζωῆς πεποιήκας.

The verb *πεποιήκας* may indicate that Adrian derived the gloss from another iteration of this comment, for instance the Latin translation of the *Expositio in Psalmos* has *vivere me fecisti* at Ps 15(16),11.

In the spiritual armour of God, the sword of the Spirit stands for the word (*ῥῆμα*) of God (Eph 6,17b). This means according to Theodore the working (*ἐνέργεια*) of the Spirit, just as in Ps 32(33),6 the “word (*λόγος*) of the Lord” stands for the power and the working of God. Also, the prophets have the habit of speaking of God’s working as God’s word⁵¹. This interpretation agrees with that in the commentary on the minor prophets⁵². But in the *Expositio in Psalmos* Theodore simply explains *λόγος* as command (*πρόσταγμα*)⁵³. Adrian offers no parallel in this case⁵⁴.

46. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Gal.* 1.4-5.

47. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 62-62.3. See the translation and notes in MARTENS, *Adrian’s Introduction* (n. 15), pp. 217-219.

48. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Eph.* 3.18-19a.

49. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Ps.* 15.11; 24.4; *in Oseam* 6.1-3.

50. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 19.3; MARTENS, *Adrian’s Introduction* (n. 15), p. 156.

51. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Eph.* 6.17b.

52. For instance Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Oseam* 1.1; *in Nachoum* 1.1.

53. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *in Ps.* 32.6a.

54. In addition it should be noted that Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 59.5 interprets *πνεῦμα* in Ps 32(33),6 differently than Theodore.

Another lexical *ιδίωμα* Adrian mentions is “name” instead of a person, with a citation of Ps 82,19 (83,18)⁵⁵. At Phil 2,9b Theodore employs the same Psalm to show that Christ did not receive a name, but a certain reality, namely his rightful position of glory⁵⁶.

Finally, at Philemon 6 Theodore cites Ps 50,6 (51,4) to indicate that in biblical idiom a conjunction of purpose can also be used for a result⁵⁷. Adrian argues the same, for which he could fall back on many examples from Theodore’s works⁵⁸.

Apart from lexical *ιδίωμα* Adrian has a section on *ιδιώματα* of meaning (*διάνοια*), but this part of his treatise is only concerned with anthropomorphisms in language about God. For this reason, one searches in vain in that part of Adrian’s work for parallels to some Old Testament citations in Theodore’s commentaries on the epistles of Paul that serve to illustrate certain concepts, whereas the same texts are often used elsewhere in Theodore’s work for the same or similar purposes⁵⁹. But other cases have a parallel in Adrian’s *Introduction*. At Col 1,15b Theodore discusses the meaning of “first-born of the whole creation”, which in his view means “the assumed human nature held in honour above all creation”. For the idea that “firstborn” does not entail chronological priority but priority in honour he cites Rom 8,29, Ps 88(89),27-28, Hebr 12,22-23, Exod 4,22, and Gen 6,2⁶⁰. The same texts from the Psalms and Exodus are cited by Adrian to illustrate that familial distinctions belong to anthropomorphic idiom to express God’s care⁶¹.

At Rom 8,27 Theodore addresses the custom of the holy Scripture to use pictorial representation (*κατὰ σχηματοτισμὸν*), because he thinks that Paul

55. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 48.

56. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Philip*. 2.9-11.

57. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Philem*. 6.

58. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 42; for parallels with Theodore’s work see the notes in MARTENS, *Adrian’s Introduction* (n. 15), pp. 187-189. See also SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen* (n. 23), pp. 152-155.

59. See for instance Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Rom*. 8.19 and in *Gal*. 3.26: Ps 81(82),6-7; in *Gal*. 3.19: Exodus 11 and Ps 77(78),25. At in *Col*. 1.16d Theodore invokes Dan 10,13 and 10,21 to demonstrate that *ἔργων* pertains to a ruler which has received authority over something specific. In other words, the powers enumerated by Paul are not absolute powers but always relative to a certain service. Theodore invokes the same texts from Daniel in his commentary on Gen 1,26 – so just as at Col 1,15-16 in the context of discussion of the image of God (see in *Col*. 1.15a: Gen 1,27). There his goal is different, because the texts from Daniel serve to demonstrate that the image of God cannot refer to the quality of ruling. See Theodore of Mopsuestia in *Collectio Coisliniana in Genesim* 72. F. PETIT (ed.), *Catenae Graecae in Genesim et in Exodum*. Vol. 2: *Collectio Coisliniana in Genesim* (CCSG, 15), Turnhout – Leuven, Brepols – Leuven University Press, 1986.

60. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Col*. 1.15b.

61. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 2.8; 10.

uses figurative language when he writes about the prayer of the Spirit instead of the expectation of the future excited by the grace of the Spirit⁶². He cites Ps 17,10 (18,9) (with the remark that he could have quoted more from that Psalm) and 23(24),7-10 in order to prevent that someone thinks the use of pictorial representation is a novel idea. If we look back into his earlier works, we find an extensive discussion of figures of speech and metaphors in the introduction to the commentary on Psalm 118(119), in which Psalm 17(18) figures prominently⁶³. Adrian probably made use of this discussion, because the same text is cited by him multiple times for similar purposes with a view to anthropomorphisms⁶⁴. Among the tropes listed by Adrian at the end of his introduction, personification and pictorial representation (*κατὰ σχηματισμόν*) are mentioned after each other, and under the heading of personification he cites Ps 23(24),7⁶⁵.

According to Peter Martens the list of tropes in Adrian's *Introduction* can be compared to a series of terms for imitation, example, and likeness from Theodore's commentary on Hebrews⁶⁶. However, Theodore is rather providing a criticism of the style of Exod 25,9, a text parallel to Exod 25,40 that is cited in Hebr 8,5. In Exod 25,9 it says: "the pattern (*παράδειγμα*) of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture". It seems that his criticism stems from the fact that the word *παράδειγμα* lacks in Hebrews, which has *ὑπόδειγμα* instead (Hebr 8,5). In Theodore's view it is better to call the first *παράδειγμα* in Exod 25,9 *ὑπόδειγμα* (he also calls it *τύπος*, *ἀφομοίωμα*, and *μίμημα*) because the tabernacle itself reflects the universe. But the second *παράδειγμα*, that of the furniture, cannot have the same meaning because it is not fashioned after something existing like the universe. It should be read as *ὁμοίωμα*, because Moses received a likeness of its form in his soul. In the next fragment, which is about Hebr 9,5, Theodore discusses the symbolic value of the furniture of the tabernacle⁶⁷.

62. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Rom.* 8.27. See SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen* (n. 23), p. 140 n. 226 and MARTENS, *Adrian's Introduction* (n. 15), p. 249 for a discussion of the term *σχηματισμός*.

63. Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Ps.* 118, *argumentum*, Syriac fragment II.2. Ps 17,10 (18,9) is also cited in Theodore of Mopsuestia, in *Mal.* 3.1.

64. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 2.11; 4.9-10. The parallel is not noted by MARTENS, *Adrian's Introduction* (n. 15).

65. Adrian, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰς θείας γραφάς* 73.11-12. SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen* (n. 23), p. 140 n. 226 remarks that mention of pictorial representation ("bildhafte, gestalthafte Darstellung") and personification often occur together in Theodore's commentary on the Psalms.

66. MARTENS, *Adrian's Introduction* (n. 15), p. 233 n. 3.

67. Theodore of Mopsuestia in fragments from his commentary on Hebrews that are preserved in *Collectio Coisliniana in Exodum* 20-21. F. PETIT (ed.), *La chaîne sur l'Exode: Édition intégrale* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 10), Leuven, Peeters, 2000.

V. CONCLUSION

The majority of the appearances of the Old Testament in Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentaries on the epistles attributed to Paul can be divided into three categories. The first category comprises Paul's discussions of certain episodes from biblical history, of which at least three sometimes served as legitimation of allegorical interpretation. Theodore rejects that approach and instead applies the rhetorical technique of syncrisis. This method of comparison between the Old and the New Testament is reflected in the structure of his theology, which seems to have been heavily inspired by the syncritical theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The second category entails the testimonies Paul took from the Old Testament to confirm his argument. Theodore's evaluation agrees to a certain extent with the function attributed to testimonies in rhetorical practice, but he is anxious to prevent the thought that Paul read testimonies as prophecies applicable to his situation if they in their original context do not allow for such a reading. Just as in rhetorical and ecclesiastical practice the point is that Paul used testimonies that were not written with a view to his situation and that, if they fit the argument, lend authority to it. The third category consists of quotations from the Old Testament in the commentary that serve to elucidate problematic vocabulary, figures of style, and difficult concepts. Here Theodore and his Antiochene peers participate in the rhetorical criticism of their time. It is not made explicit anywhere in the commentaries on the epistles of Paul, but elsewhere Theodore is keen on pointing out that this elucidation of obscure passages eliminates the need for allegorical interpretation.

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„*UT NON ORDO LECTONIS SED RATIONIS INTELLEGATUR*“ (IN APOC. XI,5)

REKAPITULATION ALS EIN ZENTRALES HERMENEUTISCHES PRINZIP IM APOKALYPSEKOMMENTAR DES VIKTORIN VON PETTAU

I. VIKTORIN ALS KOMMENTATOR – AN DEN ANFÄNGEN LATEINISCHER SCHRIFTKOMMENTARE

Hieronymus (347-419) überliefert in seinem Werk *De viris illustribus* über Victorinus, den Bischof der römischen Kolonie Poetovio (Pettau), dieser habe neben einer Schrift gegen die Häretiker (*Adversum omnes haereses*) eine ganze Reihe von Kommentaren (*commentarii*) zu biblischen Büchern verfasst. Acht alttestamentliche Bücher zählt Hieronymus auf: die drei ersten Bücher des Pentateuchs, Genesis, Exodus und Levitikus, die Prophetenbücher Jesaja, Ezechiel und Habakuk und aus der Gruppe der Schriften Kohelet und das Hohelied; für das Neue Testament nennt er einen Kommentar zur Offenbarung des Johannes (*Vir. ill.* 74). An anderer Stelle¹ erwähnt er außerdem einen Kommentar zum Matthäusevangelium, den Hieronymus auch selbst benutzt habe. Seine Auflistung der Werke Viktorins will Hieronymus lediglich als eine Auswahl verstanden wissen. Ausdrücklich fügt er, diese abschließend, in *Vir. ill.* 74 ein „*et multa alia*“ an, das neben den neun (bzw. zehn) genannten durchaus auch noch weitere Kommentarwerke einschließen könnte.

Trifft die Aufzählung des Hieronymus zu – und es gibt keinen Grund, daran zu zweifeln –, dann kann der in lateinischer Sprache schreibende Viktorin, der in der zweiten Hälfte des 3. Jhs gewirkt und wahrscheinlich im Jahr 304 n. Chr. im Zuge der Christenverfolgung unter Kaiser Diokletian den Märtyrertod erlitten hat², zu Recht als ein herausragender Kommentator

1. Hieronymus, *transl. Orig. in Luc.* prolog. (PL 26, 220); *in Matth.*, prolog. (PL 26, 20); vgl. auch Cassiodorus, *Inst. div.* I,7,1.

2. Nach M. DULAËY, *Victorin de Poetovio: Premier exégète latin*, 2 Tomes (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 139-140), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes,

der Heiligen Schrift und mit mindestens zwei Kommentaren auch des Neuen Testaments bezeichnet werden. Auch wenn heute nur mehr ein einziger Kommentar Viktorins, sein Apokalypsekommentar, erhalten geblieben ist³, steht Viktorin damit an den Anfängen der lateinischen Bibelexegese und kann mit Antonie Wlosok vielleicht sogar als deren „Begründer“⁴ bezeichnet werden. Der Apokalypsekommentar ist wahrscheinlich um 258 bis 260 n. Chr. entstanden⁵, gilt gemeinhin als der älteste Kommentar der Johannesoffenbarung in lateinischer Sprache und ist zugleich auch der älteste erhalten gebliebene lateinischsprachige Bibelkommentar überhaupt. Allein schon deshalb kommt ihm besondere Bedeutung zu. Dass Hieronymus in seinem Prolog zu der von ihm bearbeiteten Version des Kommentars diesen lediglich zu den „opusculi“, zu den „kleinen Schriften“ jenes „hervorragenden Mannes“ zählte, sollte jedenfalls nicht überbewertet werden⁶.

Textauslegung, konkret die Auslegung der prophetischen Schriften des Alten Testaments, betrachtet Viktorin selbst übrigens als eine Geistesgabe, die den im Glauben bereits gefestigten Gemeinden zum Trost gegeben sei, und er identifiziert die Ausleger, die Interpreten dieser Schriften, mit den bei Paulus in der Aufzählung von 1 Kor 12,28 an zweiter Stelle genannten Propheten und nicht etwa mit den dort ebenfalls genannten Lehrern (*in Apoc. X,2: quos interpretes prophetas dixit*; vgl. 1 Kor 14,29; 11,5)⁷. Es bleibt

1993, Bd. I, S. 12, ist auch ein Martyrium 283/284 n. Chr. im Zuge einer früheren Verfolgung denkbar.

3. Das neben einem Traktat über die Welterschöpfung (*De fabrica mundi*) von den Werken Viktorins ebenfalls noch erhalten gebliebene Fragment zur Chronologie Jesu wird des Öfteren zwar seinem verloren gegangenen Matthäuskommentar zugeschrieben, ohne freilich diese Annahme verifizieren zu können. Vgl. z. B. A. WLOSOK, *Victorinus von Pettau*, in R. HERZOG (Hg.), *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*. Fünfter Band: *Restauration und Erneuerung: Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374 n. Chr.* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, VIII/5), München, Beck, 1989, 410-415, S. 413.

4. WLOSOK, *Victorinus von Pettau* (Anm. 3), S. 413. Vgl. G. WALDHERR, *Art. Victorinus von Poetovio*, in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 12 (1997) 1355-1358, S. 1356.

5. So mit Martine Dulaey; vgl. z. B. M. DULAEY, *Art. Viktorin von Pettau*, in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 35 (2003) 97-99, S. 97.

6. *Prologus Hieronymi* 4-7: *Ita mihi in hoc uidetur quod misisti uolumine, quod in Apocalypsin explanationem uidetur continere Victorini. Et est periculosum et obrectatorum latratibus patens de egregii uiri opusculis iudicare* (Text: *Victorini Poetovionensis Explanatio in Apocalypsin una cum recensione Hieronymi, Tractatus de fabrica mundi, Fragmentum de vita Christi*, hg. R. GRAYSON [CCSL, 5], Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, S. 108-109; Hervorhebung K.H.).

7. Vgl. dazu auch G. PANI, *Vittorino di Petovio: Il metodo esegetico nel più antico commento latino all'Apocalisse*, in L. PADOVESE (Hg.), *Atti del IX Simposio di Efeso su S. Giovanni Apostolo* (Turchia: La Chiesa e la sua storia, 17), Roma, Istituto Franciscano di Spiritualità Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano, 2003, 161-180, S. 170-171 – Lateinischer Text und Stellenangaben zu den Werken Viktorins nach: *Victorin de Poetovio, Sur l'Apocalypse suivie du Fragment chronologique et de La construction du monde. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, commentaire et*

offen, ob sich Viktorin mit Blick auf seine eigene Tätigkeit als Interpret alttestamentlicher Schriften damit auch selbst die Funktion eines dieserart christlichen Propheten zugeschrieben hat. Auch bleibt von seinen Ausführungen an dieser Stelle her unklar, ob diese Zuschreibung – ein Selbstverständnis als christlicher Prophet –, so sie denn zutrifft, in seinen Augen auch für den oder einen Kommentator der Offenbarung des Johannes gegolten hätte.

II. VIKTORINS APOKALYPSEKOMMENTIERUNG – HERMENEUTISCHE PRINZIPIEN UND METHODISCHE STRATEGIEN

Die Frage nach hermeneutischen Prinzipien und methodischen Strategien seiner Kommentierung der Johannesapokalypse lässt sich für Viktorin von Pettau über weite Strecken lediglich indirekt aus dem Text und der Art und Weise der konkret durchgeführten Kommentierung erschließen. Nur sehr selten begegnen Textpassagen, die so etwas wie eine Thematisierung seines Vorgehens oder gar eine Reflexion des Viktorin darüber zu erkennen geben.

Ein Vorwort, ein Kommentarprolog, wie er in der paganen und auch in der patristischen Exegese seit Origenes († um 254 n. Chr.) typisch ist, fehlt⁸, und damit fehlt von vornherein jener Ort, an dem man sich derartige Überlegungen oder Äußerungen zuallererst erwarten könnte und entsprechende methodische Fragen thematisiert oder hermeneutische Positionierungen

index par M. DULAËY (SC, 423), Paris, Cerf, 1997. Die kritische Ausgabe von GRYSO (Anm. 6) schlägt eine andere Zählung vor.

8. Das Fehlen eines Prologs überrascht umso mehr, als Viktorin die exegetischen Schriften des Origenes „als Hauptquelle für seine Kommentare benutzt und teilweise direkt bearbeitet oder gar übersetzt hat“ (WLOSOK, *Victorinus von Pettau* [Anm. 3], S. 413; vgl. z. B. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 61,2). Allerdings hat Origenes einen Apokalypsekommentar zwar angekündigt, aber nicht geschrieben. – Zu den Proömien des Origenes vgl. M. SKEB, *Exegese und Lebensform: Die Proömien der antiken griechischen Bibelkommentare* (Clavis Commentariorum Antiquitatis et Medii Aevi, 5), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2007, S. 137-278. Zu Origenes als Schöpfer des Bibelkommentars nach wissenschaftlichen Standards und dessen Prologtopik vgl. auch A. FÜRST, *Origen: Exegesis and Philosophy in Early Christian Alexandria*, in J. LÖSSL – J.W. WATT (Hgg.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, Farnham – Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2011, 13-32. Siehe auch den Beitrag von A. FÜRST in diesem Band, wonach erst Hieronymus in Übernahme von Origenes derartige zum Standard der griechischen Bibelauslegung gehörenden Kommentarkonventionen der lateinischsprachigen Welt vermittelt und die Prolegomena im lateinischen Westen etabliert habe. Vgl. dazu auch C.P. BÄMMEL, *Die Pauluskommentare des Hieronymus: Die ersten wissenschaftlichen lateinischen Bibelkommentare?*, in *Cristianesimo Latino e cultura Greca sino al sec. IV: XXI Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiani. Roma, 7-9 maggio 1992* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 42), Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1993, 187-207.

vorgenommen werden. Viktorin setzt mit seiner Auslegung des Apokalypsetextes ganz unvermittelt ein, und das auch nicht etwa am Beginn bei Vers 1 des 1. Kapitels, sondern mit dem Makarismus von Offb 1,3: „Der Anfang des Buches, verspricht dem, der es <liest>, hört und sich daran hält, Glückseligkeit...“, lauten die ersten Worte in Viktorins Kommentar (*in Apoc. 1,1: Principium libri beatitudinem <legenti>, audienti et seruanti promittit...*). Auch ein irgendwie gearteter Epilog, der das Gesamtwerk abrunden könnte und Gelegenheit für entsprechende Schlussbemerkungen zum eigenen Vorgehen geben würde, fehlt. Geradezu abrupt und unerwartet bricht der Kommentar am Ende ab, mitten in den Ausführungen zum Verständnis des himmlischen Jerusalems (Offb 21,1–22,5).

Prinzipien, Strategien und Kriterien seines exegetischen Vorgehens lassen sich aber durchaus am Text selbst, an dem, was gesagt wird und wie dabei vorgegangen wird, ablesen und als mehr oder weniger deutlich greifbare Voraussetzungen und Konstanten des kommentierenden Herangehens erkennen. Den Versuch, hermeneutische Prinzipien und zentrale inhaltliche Aspekte der Apokalypsekommentierung des Viktorin in einem Gesamtdurchgang und in systematisierender Form zu beschreiben, habe ich bereits in einem 2014 erschienenen Aufsatz unternommen⁹. Dabei habe ich sieben verschiedene Aspekte ausgemacht, die je für sich unterschiedlich deutlich zum Tragen und keineswegs durchgehend auf dieselbe Weise in seinem Werk zum Einsatz kommen, die formal und inhaltlich zum Teil ineinandergreifen und die auch nicht allesamt auf derselben Reflexionsebene angesiedelt sind. An erster Stelle verweise ich in diesem Aufsatz auf die Rekapitulationstheorie, jenen Aspekt also, den ich im Folgenden aufgreifen und eingehender in den Blick nehmen möchte. Als weitere Merkmale, die die Kommentierung Viktorins bestimmen, nenne ich außerdem die Einheit der beiden Testamente, die Erfüllung und Enthüllung des Alten Testaments in und durch Jesus Christus, die durchgehend dominierende allegorische Schriftauslegung, erkennbare Ansätze einer historisch-zeitgeschichtlichen Deutung, eine Interpretation aus paulinischer Perspektive und schließlich den Einfluss von Interpretationsvorgaben theologischer bzw. christologischer Art, von Glaubensüberzeugungen also, die entsprechend in den Text hineininterpretiert bzw. an den Formulierungen und Bildelementen des Schrifttextes festgemacht werden.

9. Vgl. K. HUBER, *In Apocalypsin des Viktorin von Pettau: Zu Geschichte, Form und Hermeneutik frühesten Apokalypsekommentierung*, in ID. – R. KLOTZ – C. WINTERER (Hgg.), *Tot sacramenta quot verba: Zur Kommentierung der Apokalypse von den Anfängen bis ins 12. Jahrhundert*, Münster, Aschendorff, 2014, 99-120, S. 108-119.

Relativ breit thematisiert Viktorin die Einheit der beiden Testamente, des Alten und des Neuen Testaments, und gibt sie als eine seiner grundlegenden und unhintergehbaren Überzeugungen zu erkennen¹⁰. Zahlreiche Bildelemente in den Visionsschilderungen deutet er in eben diese Richtung und bezieht daraus (unausgesprochen) die Berechtigung und die Freiheit, in seiner Auslegung gleichermaßen und gleichrangig auf Schriftbelege aus dem Alten Testament wie aus dem Neuen Testament zurückzugreifen, diese je nach Bedarf aus den unterschiedlichen Bereichen der Bibel aufzunehmen und miteinander in Beziehung zu setzen. Die gesamte Heilige Schrift wird dabei auf das Christusgeschehen hin gelesen, und umgekehrt können alttestamentliche Verheißungen von Viktorin wahrgenommen und verstanden werden, als wären sie unmittelbar durch Christus selbst gesprochen worden (vgl. *in Apoc.* I,4; IV,1).

Das scharfe, zweischneidige Schwert des in der Figur des Menschensohnlichen geschauten Christus in Offb 1,16 steht, verbunden mit dem Aufweis der Gerichtsfunktion des Wortes und der Person Jesu Christi, für die beiden Testamente, für deren Zusammengehörigkeit und Einheit (*in Apoc.* I,4)¹¹. Die beiden Edelsteine, die in Offb 4,2-3 die Erscheinung Gottes auf dem himmlischen Thron charakterisieren, deutet Viktorin erneut auf die beiden Testamente, auch hier verbunden mit dem Gerichtsgedanken (*in Apoc.* IV,2). Das Buch mit den sieben Siegeln in der Hand Gottes und in der Hand Christi (Offb 5,1.7) symbolisiert für ihn die innere Verbundenheit zwischen Altem und Neuem Testament (*in Apoc.* V,1.2). Das Öffnen der Siegel durch das Lamm (Offb 6,1ff.) versteht er als Erschließung des Alten Testaments in den Evangelien (*in Apoc.* VI,1). Und Ähnliches mehr könnte hier genannt werden (z. B. *in Apoc.* I,4: *mammae duo sunt testamenta*).

Besonders anschaulich und eingängig fällt diesbezüglich die Deutung der vier Lebewesen vor dem Thron Gottes in Offb 4,6-8 aus. Mit Irenäus von Lyon (*Haer.* III,11,8) identifiziert Viktorin die vier Lebewesen mit den vier Evangelien, deutet zugleich aber deren Flügel – insgesamt vierundzwanzig an der Zahl; jedes Lebewesen hat sechs Flügel – auf die vierundzwanzig Bücher des Alten Testaments (*in Apoc.* IV,5: *alae testimonia ueteris testamenti sunt librorum ideoque viginti quattuor sunt*). In unverkennbar

10. Vgl. insgesamt dazu auch HUBER, *In Apocalypsin* (Anm. 9), S. 110-114.

11. Als unterstützende Schriftargumente nennt Viktorin Mt 13,51-53; Mt 17,26-27; Ps 61,12. Vgl. dazu auch K. HUBER, *Aspekte der Apokalypse-Interpretation des Victorinus von Pettau am Beispiel der Christusvision in Offb 1*, in J. VERHEYDEN – T. NICKLAS – A. MERKT (Hgg.), *Ancient Christian Interpretations of „Violent Texts“ in the Apocalypse* (NTOA/SUNT, 92), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011, 94-117, S. 108-109, 114-115.

antimarkionitischer Absicht führt Viktorin dann erklärend aus, dass die Botschaft der vier Evangelien ohne ihre alttestamentlichen Flügel nicht „trägt“, dass sie ohne die „vorausverkündigten Zeugnisse“ des Alten Testaments nicht auf die erforderliche „Höhe“ des Glaubens führen kann und „wertlos“ wäre (*inanis fuerat praedicatio illorum*; vgl. 1 Kor 15,14). Häretiker, die die alttestamentlichen Prophetien verwerfen, Häretiker wie Markion also, kommen, weil sie diese „Flügel“ nicht akzeptieren, über das Irdische nicht hinaus und müssen zwangsläufig im rein Irdischen verhaftet bleiben (*non uolant, quia sunt terrena*). Umgekehrt gelte Analoges dann aber auch für die Juden, die, weil sie die Verkündigung des Neuen Testaments zurückweisen, mit den „Flügeln“ allein – so Viktorin – letztlich leblos sind (*non uiuunt*).

Insgesamt und gerade am Beispiel der vier Lebewesen und ihrer Flügel zeigt sich, dass das Festhalten an der Einheit der beiden Testamente für Viktorin unverzichtbar ist. Zusammen mit der Feststellung, dass die gesamte Verkündigung einen einzigen Zusammenhang bildet (*in Apoc. V,2: animaduertere oportet igitur hominem diligentem praedicationem uniuersam in unum cohaerere*), lässt sich indirekt daraus eine hermeneutische Konstante ableiten, so etwas wie ein hermeneutischer Schlüssel für Viktorins Schriftverständnis und eine Art methodischer Handlungsanleitung für eine von ihm dann auch exzessiv praktizierte Auslegung des Apokalypsetextes unter Bezugnahme auf Schriftstellen aus dem Alten und dem Neuen Testament. Kommentierpraxis und Basisüberzeugung seines Schriftverständnisses korrespondieren hier augenscheinlich miteinander, ohne dass das eine, die Basisüberzeugung, tatsächlich explizit zu einem methodischen Werkzeug für das interpretatorische Herangehen an den Text erklärt wird und auch ohne dass das andere, die konkrete Praxis des Schriftbezugs, mit der nicht nur bei Viktorin, sondern bei den Kirchenvätern insgesamt gegebenen Überzeugung von der Konvergenz bzw. „Harmonie“ der Bibel in Zusammenhang gebracht und von dorthin argumentativ begründet wird. Immerhin aber untermauert Viktorin diese Überzeugung bereits bei ihrer allerersten Thematisierung in *in Apoc. I,4* mit insgesamt gleich sechs verschiedenen Schriftziten quer durch die Heilige Schrift (Mt 10,34; 13,53; 17,26-27; Ps 62,12; Joh 12,48; 2 Thess 2,8).

Trotz der Vielzahl der Verweise auf die Einheit der Testamente und trotz der Breite ihrer Thematisierung wird in Viktorins Apokalypsekommentar aber kein auslegungsrelevanter Aspekt so explizit reflektiert und als ein hermeneutisches Prinzip präsentiert wie die sogenannte Rekapitulationstheorie, ein Interpretationsansatz, der bis herauf in die Gegenwart volle Gültigkeit hat. Dass „gleich an der Schwelle der gesamten Auslegungsgeschichte der

Apk dieser Grundsatz steht“, hält auch Wilhelm Bousset in seinem epochemachenden Kommentar als „beachtenswert“¹² fest.

III. REKAPITULATION BEI VIKTORIN – VORKOMMEN UND VERSTÄNDNIS

Die Begrifflichkeit, die sich in der Literatur und in der Forschung für das genannte Prinzip allgemein eingebürgert hat, ist die der Rekapitulation. Auch im Folgenden wird von Rekapitulation gesprochen, obwohl es sich eigentlich um einen Begriff handelt, den Viktorin selbst nicht gebraucht. Das lateinische „*recapitulatio*“ bzw. „*recapitulare*“ sucht man bei Viktorin vergeblich; die Begrifflichkeit kommt in seinem Kommentartext nicht vor. Für die gemeinte Sache verwendet Viktorin an den einschlägigen Stellen das Verbum „*repetere*“ für „wiederholen, wieder aufgreifen“. Im Sinne Viktorins müsste also besser vielleicht von Repetitionstheorie und dem Prinzip der Repetition gesprochen werden.

1. in Apoc. VI,7

...*Septimo aperto sigillo silentium fit in caelo semihora, initium est quietis aeternae; sed partem intellexit, quia interrupto silentio eadem per ordinem repetit. Nam si esset iuge silentium, hic finis narrandi fieret (in Apoc. VI,7).*

Ein erstes Mal begegnet das Verbum „*repetere*“ bei Viktorin in *in Apoc. VI,7*, wo er zunächst in aller Kürze auf die unzählbar große Menschenmenge aus allen Nationen, Stämmen, Völkern und Sprachen zu sprechen kommt, die vor dem himmlischen Thron stehen und ihre Gewänder im Blut des Lammes weiß gemacht haben. Offb 7,9-17, konkret die Verse Offb 7,1 und Offb 7,14, sind im Text genannt. Danach zitiert Viktorin Offb 8,1: Das siebte Siegel wird im Himmel geöffnet und im Himmel tritt für eine halbe Stunde lang Stille ein. Der Beginn der „ewigen Ruhe“ sei mit dieser Stille gemeint (*initium est quietis aeternae*), allerdings nur zu einem Teil (*partem*), nur ansatzweise, denn – so schreibt Viktorin – „nach Unterbrechung der Stille wiederholt er [Johannes] dem Verlauf nach dieselben (Ereignisse)“ (*quia interrupto silentio eadem per ordinem repetit*).

Mit den Ereignissen, die „repetiert, wiederholt“ werden, meint Viktorin wohl die im Text der Apokalypse vorausgehend geschilderten Ereignisse

12. W. BOUSSET, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, 16), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906, S. 54. Mit der Rekapitulation vertrete Viktorin nach Bousset „bereits eine geschlossene Auslegungstheorie“ (*ibid.*).

rund um die Öffnung der sieben Siegel durch das Lamm (Offb 6,1–8,1). Sie sind es, die unmittelbar im Anschluss an die kurze Stille „dem Verlauf nach“, in derselben Abfolge also (*per ordinem*), wiederholt werden. Im Text der Johannesoffenbarung folgt auf Offb 8,1 mit Offb 8,2 bzw. Offb 8,6–11,19 das Blasen der sieben Posaunen durch je einen Engel vor dem Thron Gottes. Die Schilderung gestaltet sich mit Ausnahme der Tatsache, dass erneut eine Siebenerreihe in Gang gesetzt wird und Schritt für Schritt abläuft, allerdings doch deutlich anders und fällt zudem in einzelnen Teilen durch längere, unterbrechende Abschnitte auch umfangreicher aus. Unter inhaltlicher Rücksicht lassen sich aber durchaus auch Übereinstimmungen zwischen diesen beiden Siebenerreihen entdecken, Übereinstimmungen, die jedenfalls ganz grundsätzlich darin bestehen, dass mit dem Öffnen der Siegel und mit dem Blasen der einzelnen Posaunen bedrohliche Geschehnisse, Katastrophen, Plagen und Nöte, verbunden sind.

Dass die Schilderung der endzeitlichen Ereignisse noch einmal neu einsetzen muss, leitet Viktorin aus der zeitlichen Begrenzung der Stille auf eine halbe Stunde ab. Wenn nämlich die Stille in Offb 8,1 bereits eine immerwährende wäre, dann wäre hier auch das Ende der Erzählung bzw. des zu Erzählenden erreicht (*hic finis narrandi fieret*). Sieht Viktorin mit der Öffnung des siebten Siegels im Grunde den Höhepunkt erreicht, werten moderne Kommentatoren Offb 8,1 zumeist als einen Übergangsvers, eine Unterbrechung und „dramatische Pause“, als „Reaktion auf das bisher Geschaute und Gehörte“, die überleitet zu den folgenden Posaunenvisionen, selbst aber nicht den „Abschluß und Höhepunkt des eschatologischen Geschehens“ darstellt. Zwar gilt etwa auch für Heinz Giesen die Begrenzung des Schweigens als „notwendige Voraussetzung dafür, daß der Seher weitere Visionen und Auditionen erfahren kann“¹³, anders aber als bei Viktorin werden bei Giesen und vielen anderen die Vision der sieben Posaunenengel und in der Folge das Blasen der sieben Posaunen als Inhalt der siebten Siegelvision begriffen und die beiden Siebenerreihen damit nicht einfach als sich linear wiederholende, sondern als ineinander gestaffelte Visionssequenzen verstanden¹⁴.

2. in Apoc. VIII,2

Tuba autem uerbum est potestatis; et licet repetat per fialas, non quasi bis factum esse dicat, sed quoniam semel quod futurum est, a Deo decretum est eis ut fiat, ideo

13. H. GIESEN, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburger Neues Testament), Regensburg, Pustet, 1997, S. 204 bzw. S. 202.

14. Vgl. *ibid.*, S. 51, 202–205.

bis dicitur. Quicquid igitur in tubis minus dixit, id in fialis propensius dixit. Nec aspiciendus ordo dictorum, quoniam septiformis Spiritus Sanctus, ubi ad nouissimum temporis finemque percucurrit, redit rursus ad eadem tempora et supplet quae minus dixit. Nec requirendus est ordo in Apocalypsi, sed intellectus requirendus; est enim et pseudopropheta. ... (in Apoc. VIII,2).

Der bei Viktorin in *in Apoc.* VI,7 angedeutete Gedanke wird in *in Apoc.* VIII,2 wieder aufgegriffen und die zunächst eher allgemeine Notiz wird dort konkreter auf die Darstellung der Johannesoffenbarung angewandt. Im Kontext seiner Kommentierung jenes Textabschnitts, der mit der Schilderung des Blasens der Posaunen einsetzt (Offb 8,6ff.), führt Viktorin nun ausdrücklich und ausführlich den Grundsatz der Rekapitulation aus.

„Die Posaune ist das Wort der Macht“, schreibt Viktorin zunächst noch einleitend in *in Apoc.* VIII,2, verlässt in der Folge aber die unmittelbare Erschließung einzelner Verse und Textelemente, um an dieser Stelle mit Feststellungen und Erklärungen grundsätzlicher Art zur Erzähltechnik des Johannes fortzufahren und Schlussfolgerungen daraus zu ziehen. Dabei konstatiert Viktorin zunächst zum einen, dass Johannes das bei den Posaunen Gesagte im Kontext der Visionssequenz vom Ausgießen der sieben Schalen (Offb 16,2-21) wiederholt, letztlich also dasselbe zweimal gesagt wird (*repetat per fialas ... bis dicitur*). Und zum zweiten stellt Viktorin fest, dass Johannes das, was er in den Posaunenvisionen geringfügiger darstellt oder – je nach Verständnis des „minus“ – vielleicht einfach auch nur kürzer ausführt, später dann bei der Schilderung der Schalenvisionen stärker, mit größerer Intensität darstellt bzw. ausführlicher – „propensius“ – sagt (*quicquid igitur in tubis minus dixit, id in fialis propensius dixit*). Gegenüber den Posaunen sei also bei den Schalen zumindest partiell eine Steigerung zu verzeichnen, entweder was den Umfang und die Ausführlichkeit der Darstellung oder was das Ausmaß der referierten Geschehnisse anlangt. Was Johannes – so Viktorin drittens – damit jedenfalls nicht zum Ausdruck bringen möchte, ist, dass sich das Geschilderte zweimal ereignet habe oder ereignen werde (*non quasi bis factum esse dicat*). Für Johannes sei vielmehr klar, dass das, was er zweimal bringt, sich nur ein einziges Mal ereignen wird (*semel quod futurum est*).

Viktorin liefert in diesem Zusammenhang dann auch eine Begründung dafür, weshalb diese Ereignisse zweifach geschildert werden: Die Wiederholung dient demnach dazu, die Gewissheit dessen, was von Gott her geschehen muss, zu unterstreichen, deutlich zu machen, dass das alles von Gott festgelegt und beschlossen ist und für die Adressaten auch tatsächlich eintreffen wird (*a Deo decretum est eis ut fiat*). Begründet sich darin die Legitimität (*licet*) der wiederholten Schilderung, so erklärt sich für Viktorin

die unterschiedliche Ausführlichkeit und Intensität des Dargestellten aus dem Wesen des Heiligen Geistes, d. h. pneumatologisch und inspirations-theologisch. Es entspreche der Eigenart und Dynamik des „siebenförmigen“ Heiligen Geistes, die Abfolge der endzeitlichen Ereignisse in mehrfachen und noch dazu zunehmend gesteigerten Anläufen zu präsentieren. Sobald der Heilige Geist die Ereignisse bis zum Ende durchheilt habe, komme er wieder auf dieselben Zeiten zurück und ergänze, was er vorher nur kurz geoffenbart hat (*ubi ad nouissimum temporis finemque percucurrit, redit rursus ad eadem tempora et supplet quae minus dixit*). Wiederholung, unterschiedliches Erzähltempo und divergierende Ausgestaltung der Inhalte sind den genannten Siebenerreihen also aus offenbarungstheologischer Sicht von vornherein eingeschrieben.

Aus all dem zieht Viktorin in *in Apoc.* VIII,2 schließlich eine zweifache Lese- und Verstehensanleitung für den Text der Johannesoffenbarung und formuliert damit so etwas wie eine hermeneutische Vorgabe für sein eigenes interpretatorisches Vorgehen: Weder dürfe die Abfolge des Geschilderten allzu genau beachtet werden (*nec aspiciendus ordo dictorum*), noch sollte überhaupt nach einer solchen linearen, chronologisch geordneten Abfolge in der Apokalypse gesucht werden (*nec requirendus est ordo in Apocalypsi*). Weil vom Text selbst her klargemacht werde, dass das Prinzip der Rekapitulation bzw. Repetition zu veranschlagen sei, ergibt sich für Viktorin als Quintessenz positiv formuliert: Nicht nach der linearen Abfolge, nach der Ordnung in der Apokalypse ist zu suchen, sondern die Bedeutung, den dahinterliegenden Sinn des Gesagten gilt es zu erfassen (*nec requirendus est ordo in Apocalypsi, sed intellectus requirendus*). Alles andere wäre aus Sicht des Viktorin einzustufen als Falschprophetie bzw. führt letztlich zu einer solchen (*est enim et pseudopropheta*).

Nicht ganz klar ist, ob der hier ausführlich formulierte Grundsatz der Rekapitulation lediglich die Darstellung der Posaunen- und Schalenreihe betrifft, wie es zumindest der Beginn in *in Apoc.* VIII,2 naheulegen scheint, oder ob dieser Grundsatz bereits auch unter Einbeziehung der Reihe der Siegelöffnung gilt, wie es *in Apoc.* VI,7 anzudeuten scheint. Ein formaler und inhaltlicher Vergleich der drei Siebenerreihen erlaubt es tatsächlich, wesentlich engere Parallelen zwischen der zweiten und der dritten Siebenerreihe, der Posaunen- und der Schalenreihe, zu erkennen und dabei auch das Moment der Steigerung auszumachen¹⁵. Unabhängig davon ist aber nicht zu übersehen,

15. So etwa J. ROLOFF, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Zürcher Bibelkommentar. Neues Testament, 18), Zürich, Theologischer Verlag Zürich, ³2001, S. 94-95, der in einer schematischen Gegenüberstellung dieser beiden Visionenreihen die Übereinstimmungen hinsichtlich

dass Viktorin die Schlussfolgerungen aus seiner Rekapitulationstheorie in *in Apoc.* VIII,2 am Ende auf das Verständnis der gesamten Johannesapokalypse hin ausweitet: Für die Apokalypse insgesamt gilt es, nicht nach der Ordnung, sondern nach dem Sinn des Gesagten zu suchen.

3. *in Apoc.* XI,5

...Diligenter ergo et cum summa sollicitudine sequi oportet propheticam praedicationem et intellegere, quoniam Spiritus Sanctus sparse praedicat et praeposterat et percurrit usque ad nouissimum tempus, rursus tempora superiora repetit, et quoniam quod facturus est semel, aliquoties quasi factum esse ostendit – quod nisi intellegas aliquoties dictum, non aliquoties futurum, in grandem caliginem incidis –, ergo interpretatio sequentium dictorum in eo constabit, ut non ordo lectionis sed rationis intellegatur (in Apoc. XI,5).

Mit *in Apoc.* XI,5 findet sich am Ende der Auslegung der Perikope von den beiden Zeugen (Offb 11,3-14) ein dritter und vergleichsweise ausführlicher Textabschnitt, in dem Viktorin erneut seine Theorie der Rekapitulation zur Sprache bringt und erläutert. Er hebt dabei ganz auf die besondere Wirksamkeit des Heiligen Geistes ab, die sich entsprechend in den prophetischen Ankündigungen und in der Darstellungsform der Apokalypse niederschlägt, und er macht dazu Aussagen, die sich ähnlich schon in *in Apoc.* VIII,2 finden und sich teilweise damit decken. Der Heilige Geist – so Viktorin an dieser Stelle – macht allenthalben verstreut Ankündigungen, kehrt Ereignisse um, durchheilt die Ereignisse bis zur Endzeit und wiederholt dann noch einmal die vorausgehenden Zeiten (*Spiritus Sanctus sparse praedicat et praeposterat et percurrit usque ad nouissimum tempus, rursus tempora superiora repetit*). Und der Heilige Geist – so Viktorin weiter – stellt das, was er ein einziges Mal tun wird, so dar, als ob es sich mehrmals ereignet habe (*quod facturus est semel, aliquoties quasi factum esse ostendit*).

Das Prinzip der Rekapitulation ist an dieser Stelle deutlich weiter gefasst und nicht mehr auf einen konkreten Textbezug oder bestimmte Perikopen hin eingeschränkt. Entsprechend formuliert Viktorin hier von vornherein seine Schlussfolgerungen für ein adäquates Herangehen an den Text mit Blick auf die Johannesoffenbarung insgesamt. Die beschriebene Charakteristik pneumatologischer bzw. inspirationstheologischer Art erfordert es demnach, den prophetischen Inhalten der Apokalypse besonders aufmerksam und mit

des Inhalts, des Wirkungsbereichs und der Auswirkungen der Plagen und die des Öfteren damit verbundene Intensivierung oder Entschränkung des Ausmaßes der Katastrophen deutlich vor Augen führt. Vgl. z. B. auch G. BORNKAMM, *Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis*, in *ZNW* 36 (1937) 132-149, S. 134-135.

größtem Bemühen zu folgen und sie auf diese Weise und unter diesen Vorzeichen verstehen zu lernen (*diligenter ergo et cum summa sollicitudine sequi oportet propheticam praedicationem et intellegere*). Wer das Faktum, ja die Regel der Rekapitulation bei der Lektüre außer Acht lässt und deshalb nicht begreift, dass das, was im Text mehrfach geschildert wird, sich mitnichten auch mehrfach ereignen wird, der gerät – so Viktorin – mit seiner Auslegung „*in grandem caliginem*“, in einen dichten, undurchdringlichen Nebel. Für Viktorin folgt daraus – ähnlich wie schon in *in Apoc.* VIII,2 –, dass eine Interpretation der Abfolge der Ereignisse, wie sie in der Johannesoffenbarung geboten wird, nicht darauf hinauslaufen kann, die Anordnung des Gelesenen zu verstehen, sondern es vielmehr darum geht, den Sinn, die dahinterstehende „*ratio*“ und die von dorthier sich erschließende Anordnung zu erfassen (*ut non ordo lectionis sed rationis intellegatur*).

Nur angedeutet sei an dieser Stelle eine Beobachtung, die gegebenenfalls das Prinzip der Rekapitulation bei Viktorin in einen noch wesentlich weiteren, letztlich gesamtbiblischen Kontext einschreibt. Seine Ausführungen dazu in *in Apoc.* XI,5 werden nämlich mit einem schlussfolgernden „*ergo*“ eingeleitet, verweisen damit also auf unmittelbar vorausgehend Ausgeführtes, das sich seinerseits aber vordergründig nur schwer in die Überlegungen zur Rekapitulation innerhalb der Apokalypse einordnen lässt. Dass die Stadt Jerusalem auch Sodom und Ägypten genannt wird (Offb 11,8), wird unmittelbar vorher in Erinnerung gerufen; und der vorausgehende Abschnitt *in Apoc.* XI,4 bietet eine Zusammenstellung von Schriftstellen, eine „Sammlung von Zeugnissen“ (*multa testimonia nobis in hoc capitulo contrahenda sunt*), die ihrerseits analog zu Offb 11,7 davon sprechen, dass der Antichrist aus dem Abgrund heraufgestiegen ist: Ein Prophetentext wird bemüht, Ez 31,3-4¹⁶ mit Verweis auf Assur (vgl. Jes 8,7), und die Rede vom „Gesetzwidrigen“ (ὁ ἄνομος) bei Paulus in 2 Thess 2,7-9.10-11. Möchte Viktorin mit seinem schlussfolgernden „*ergo*“ etwa andeuten, dass Rekapitulation über den Text der Johannesoffenbarung hinausgeht und analoge Aussagen aus alttestamentlicher und urchristlicher Zeit miteinander verbindet und letztlich auf ein und dasselbe eschatologische Ereignis hin fokussiert? Ein Argument, das eine derartige Schlussfolgerung gegebenenfalls stützen könnte, findet sich am Ende von *in Apoc.* XIV,2, wo Viktorin darauf hinweist, dass die Apokalypse und auch der Prophet Jesaja dort von Babylon sprechen, wo Ezechiel von Tyrus spricht, und dann dazu feststellt: „Schließlich also, wenn du vergleichst, was über Tyrus gesagt ist und was über Babylon Jesaja und die Apokalypse sagten, wirst du finden, dass alles ein

16. Irrtümlich in *in Apoc.* XI,4 dem Propheten Jesaja zugeschrieben (*ait enim Esaias...*).

und dasselbe ist“ (*denique autem si compares, quae de Sor dicta sunt et quae de Babylone Esaias et Apocalypsis dixit, unum omnia esse inuenies*). Möglicherweise gehen derartige Überlegungen zu weit. Aber auch ohne diese Spekulationen erreicht das Prinzip der Rekapitulation bei Viktorin in *in Apoc. XI,5* eine Dimension, die die Johannesoffenbarung insgesamt tangiert und nicht mehr allein auf die drei Siebenerreihen eingeschränkt ist.

4. *in Apoc. XIV,3 und in Apoc. XV*

...et quidem pluribus speciebus hic illud ostendit, <sicut in messe arida>, sed semel in aduentum Domini, consummationem regni Antichristi et adapertionem regni sanctorum <futurum est> (in Apoc. XIV,3).

Eamdem repetens persecutionem dicit Apocalypsis... (in Apoc. XV).

An späterer Stelle ruft Viktorin noch zwei weitere Male das Prinzip der Rekapitulation in aller Kürze in Erinnerung, ohne dabei eigens darauf einzugehen.

In *in Apoc. XIV,3* macht er im Zusammenhang seiner Kommentierung des Erntebildes von Offb 14,14-20, der Getreideernte und der Weinlese, zu der der Menschensohn jeweils einen Engel auffordert, darauf aufmerksam, dass Johannes das damit gemeinte Gerichts- und Vernichtungsgeschehen zwar in mehreren Bildern vor Augen führt, es sich bei der Parusie des Herrn aber nur einmal ereignen werde (*et quidem pluribus speciebus hic illud ostendit, ... sed semel in aduentum Domini ... futurum est*).

In *in Apoc. XV* leitet Viktorin seine knappe Notiz zur Vision der sieben Schalenengel (Offb 15,1) mit der Bemerkung ein: „Dieselbe Verfolgung wiederholend, sagt die Apokalypse...“ (*eamdem repetens persecutionem dicit Apocalypsis*). Dass damit auf die Posaunenreihe zurückverwiesen wird, d. h. die Rekapitulation der dort bereits geschilderten Ereignisse angezeigt wird, legt die ausdrückliche Thematisierung der Siebenzahl der Plagen an dieser Stelle nahe: „Der Zorn Gottes trifft nämlich immer ein verstocktes Volk mit sieben Plagen...“ (*semper enim ira Dei percutit populum contumacem septem plagis...*).

IV. REKAPITULATION ALS DARSTELLUNGSPRINZIP – AUSWIRKUNGEN AUF VIKTORINS KOMMENTARTECHNIK

Inwiefern und wie schlägt sich im Kommentar des Viktorin von Pettau selbst das für die Darstellung der Johannesapokalypse als grundlegend aufgewiesene Prinzip der Rekapitulation bzw. Repetition nieder? Findet sich über die Thematisierung an den genannten Stellen hinaus eine diesem Prinzip

korrespondierende Umsetzung im Werk des Viktorin? Die Frage lässt sich positiv beantworten: Das ist tatsächlich der Fall und es ist zunächst vor allem auf der formalen Ebene zu beobachten, d. h. mit Blick auf das Ausmaß der Kommentierung und die Frage, was von Viktorin kommentiert wird und was nicht. Daneben finden sich aber auch Aspekte inhaltlicher Art, die mit seiner Rekapitulationstheorie mehr oder weniger deutlich in Verbindung gebracht werden können.

1. *Beobachtungen auf formaler Ebene*

Während Viktorin die Öffnung der sieben Siegel (Offb 6,1–8,1) einschließlich der Vision in Offb 7 sukzessive kommentiert (*in Apoc.* VI,1–VIII,1), geht er in *in Apoc.* VIII,2 im Anschluss an seine ersten, etwas breiteren Ausführungen zum Prinzip der Rekapitulation nur noch sehr allgemein und extrem verkürzend auf das ein, was in der Posaunenreihe (Offb 8,6–9,21; 11,15–19) und was in der erst viel später im Textverlauf folgenden Schalenreihe (Offb 16,2–21) geschildert wird, und zwar ohne ein Textzitat zu bringen oder eine konkrete Textkommentierung zu bieten. Posaunen- und Schalenreihe werden in demselben Atemzug genannt und ohne weitere Differenzierung abgehandelt. Viktorin bietet an dieser Stelle lediglich eine grobe Auflistung von Inhalten, Ereignissen, die sowohl „in den Posaunen als auch in den Schalen“ niedergeschrieben sind (*sunt igitur scripta quae sunt in tubis et in fialis*). Immerhin aber werden in der Folge sieben (!) Elemente aufgezählt und durch „*aut*“ miteinander verknüpft: die Verheerungen von auf die Welt geschickten Plagen, das Rasen des Antichristen selbst, die Ablehnung der Völker, die Verschiedenartigkeit der Plagen, die Hoffnung auf das Reich der Heiligen, der Untergang von Städten und der Untergang Babylons, d. h. der Stadt Rom (*...aut plagarum orbi missarum clades aut ipsius Antichristi insania aut populorum detrectatio aut plagarum differentia aut spes in regno sanctorum aut ruina ciuitatum aut ruina Babylonis, id est ciuitatis Romanae*). Eine Zuordnung der einzelnen Elemente dieser als Kurzfassung beider Plagenreihen zu verstehenden Auflistung zu konkreten Textabschnitten oder Visionen ist kaum möglich und hier vielleicht auch nicht angezielt¹⁷. Spätestens mit den beiden letzten Elementen, dem Hinweis auf den Untergang der Städte und den Untergang Babylons, scheint Viktorin aber den Abschluss der Schalenreihe, die Ereignisse im Zusammenhang mit dem Ausgießen der siebten Schale in Offb 16,17–21, im Blick zu haben und damit den großen Gesamtbogen abzurunden.

17. Vgl. dazu etwa die Überlegungen von DULAËY, *Viktorin de Poetovio* I (Anm. 2), S. 186.

Mehr oder weniger ausführlich kommentiert werden in der Folge nur noch Zwischenstücke, nicht aber die Visionen der Siebenerreihen selbst: so etwa Offb 8,13 (der Adler, der das dreifache Wehe ankündigt), Abschnitte aus Offb 10 (der gewaltige Engel und die Aufforderung, das Buch zu verschlingen), die Kapitel Offb 11 (die beiden Zeugen), Offb 12 (der Drache und die Frau) und Offb 13, letzteres in Verbindung mit Offb 17 (die beiden Tiere und die Hure Babylon), und die Gerichtsankündigungen in Offb 14. Wenn an späterer Stelle Offb 15,1, das Auftreten der sieben Schalenengel mit den sieben letzten Plagen, in aller Kürze angesprochen wird (*in Apoc.* XV), dann einleitend explizit mit dem Hinweis, dass damit „dieselbe Verfolgung“ rekapituliert werde (*eamdem repetens persecutionem*), ohne aber, dass im Anschluss daran die Ereignisse dieser Verfolgung angesprochen oder ausgeführt werden würden. Nach der knappen Notiz zu Offb 15,1 setzt Viktorin seine Kommentierung unmittelbar mit Offb 19,11, der Vision Christi in der Figur des Reiters auf einem weißen Pferd, fort.

Insgesamt zeigt sich, dass Viktorin, von ganz allgemeinen, zusammenfassenden Bemerkungen abgesehen, die zweite und die dritte Plagenreihe gänzlich übergeht und sie nicht in seine Auslegung mit einbezieht. Sofern das – und das darf wohl angenommen werden – mit der gerade im Kontext dieser beiden Siebenerreihen jeweils zu Beginn konstatierten Rekapitulation zusammenhängt (*in Apoc.* VI,7; VIII,2; XV), erübrigt sich für Viktorin nach Kenntnisnahme und Interpretation der ersten Siebenerreihe eine Kommentierung der beiden weiteren deshalb, weil in ihnen zwar vielleicht Ergänzungen, Intensivierungen o. Ä. gegeben sind, im Grunde aber nichts Neues mehr zu entdecken ist. Mag der Apokalypsetext selbst die Schilderung der endzeitlichen Ereignisse wiederholen, für die Kommentierung dieses Textes kann auf eine derartige Wiederholung verzichtet werden. Indirekt deutet Viktorin mit diesem Vorgehen auch an, dass er nicht nur die dritte Siebenerreihe als Wiederholung der zweiten versteht, sondern alles schon in der ersten Siebenerreihe der Siegelöffnung ausgesagt findet¹⁸.

Mit Blick auf einen konkret gefassten Textabschnitt der Johannesapokalypse begegnet der Verweis auf Rekapitulation bei Viktorin sonst nur noch für die parallel gestaltete Gerichtsvision von der Weizen- und der Traubenernte in Offb 14,14-20. Und auch in diesem Kontext lässt sich feststellen, dass Viktorin in der Folge nur eines der beiden Visionsbilder, nämlich jenes

18. C.H. GIBLIN, *Recapitulation and the Literary Coherence of John's Apocalypse*, in *CBQ* 56 (1994) 81-95, S. 81, äußert demgegenüber die Vermutung, dass Viktorin allein die Posaunen- und Schalenvisionen im Blick hat und erst andere nach ihm auch die Siegelvisionen mit einbeziehen und das Prinzip der Rekapitulation darauf ausweiten.

der Traubenernte, ausführlicher kommentiert, während er auf das vorausgehende Bild von der überreifen Ernte lediglich in einer knappen Parenthese Bezug nimmt (*sicut in messe arida*) und es im Grunde gänzlich überspringt (*in Apoc. XIV,3*).

Es gehört allerdings insgesamt zu den Charakteristika des Apokalypsekommentars des Viktorin, dass keineswegs der gesamte Text der Johannesoffenbarung kommentiert wird, sondern Textpassagen und ganze Kapitel auch andernorts unbehandelt bleiben (z. B. Offb 18,1–19,10)¹⁹. Viktorin geht in seinem Kommentarwerk eklektisch vor und strebt von vornherein keine vollständige Textauslegung an. Das Fehlen oder komprimierte Zusammenziehen von Kommentierung kann daher zunächst einmal nur für jene Textpassagen als Hinweis auf Rekapitulation veranschlagt werden, wo dies von Viktorin auch explizit thematisiert wird.

2. Aspekte inhaltlicher Art

Neben den eher formalen Beobachtungen stellt sich inhaltlich die Frage, wieweit sich an Viktorins Auslegung selbst die von ihm geforderte Suche nach dem Sinn des in der Apokalypse Gesagten ablesen lässt. Was bedeutet für ihn „*sed intellectus requirendus*“ (*in Apoc. VIII,2*)? Wie versteht er sein „*sed [ordo] rationis intellegatur*“ (*in Apoc. XI,5*)?

Dem soll primär anhand der in diesen Aussagen gebrauchten Begrifflichkeit näher zu kommen versucht werden. Während die beiden Substantive „*ratio*“ und „*intellectus*“ dabei allerdings nicht wirklich weiterhelfen – „*ratio*“ begegnet neben *in Apoc. XI,5* nur noch zweimal als Ausdruck für „Grund, Begründung“ (*in Apoc. IV,3; XXI,2*), „*intellectus*“ neben *in Apoc. VIII,2* gar nur noch einmal im Zitat von Jes 11,2-3 als eine der Eigenschaften des siebenförmigen Geistes („Geist der Weisheit und Einsicht...“) –, gibt der einschlägige Gebrauch des Verbums „*intellegere*“, das im Kontext der Thematisierung des Phänomens der Rekapitulation in *in Apoc. XI,5* immerhin gleich dreimal gebraucht wird und auch schon im Zusammenhang von *in Apoc. VI,7* begegnet, doch einigen weiterführenden Aufschluss.

Ein erstes Mal begegnet das Verbum in *in Apoc. I,5* bei Viktorins Deutung der vielen Wasser, mit denen in Offb 1,15 die Stimme des Menschensohngleichen verglichen wird: Die vielen Wasser – heißt es dort – „werden verstanden, aufgefasst“ als „Völker“, aber auch als „das Geschenk der Taufe“

19. Vgl. WLOSOK, *Victorinus von Pettau* (Anm. 3), S. 413, die darauf hinweist, dass die Form der Kommentierung „weniger die eines zusammenhängenden Kommentars, sondern mehr scholienhaft“ gewesen zu sein scheint.

(*aquae multae populi intelleguntur, sed et donum baptismi...*). „*Intellegere*“ steht hier im Kontext allegorischer Deutung eines visionären Bildelements, ähnlich wie später in *in Apoc.* XII,7, wo Viktorin davon spricht, dass das Drittel der Sterne, die der Drache mit seinem Schwanz hinwegfegt (Offb 12,4), richtigerweise als die ihm unterstellten Engel zu verstehen sei (*sed, quod uerius intellegi debet, angelorum sibi subditorum...*). In *in Apoc.* VI,4 attestiert Viktorin den Gläubigen mit dreimaligem Gebrauch des Verbums ein entsprechend allegorisierendes „*intellegere*“ hinsichtlich der beiden Altäre im Tempel (vgl. Ex 30,3; 27,2), die demnach nichts anderes bezeichnen als den Himmel und die Erde, und er erschließt ein derartiges Verständnis unter Zuhilfenahme zusätzlicher Schriftverweise (z. B. Mt 5,23-24; Hebr 9,7). Was bereits andernorts in der Schrift „verstanden“ werden könne, das gelte es – so Viktorin in *in Apoc.* XI,3 zur Umschreibung der beiden Zeugen als zwei Leuchter und zwei Ölbäume (Offb 11,4; vgl. Sach 4,11-14) – spätestens nun in der Apokalypse zu „begreifen“ (*ideo admonuit ut, si in alio legens non intellexisti, hic intellegas*). Durch das Öffnen der Siegel des Buches durch Christus (Offb 6,1ff.) könne man nach Viktorin das Alte Testament erst „klar und offen verstehen“ (*in Apoc.* V,2: *intelleguntur ... aperte intellegitur*). Von „verstehen“ („*intellegere*“) spricht Viktorin aber auch dann, wenn es gilt, Gesagtes auf die Zeit zu übertragen, in der die Apokalypse geschrieben wurde, im Kontext also einer zeitgeschichtlichen Deutung, wie sie in *in Apoc.* XIII,2 für Offb 17,9-11 geboten wird (*intellegi igitur oportet <tempus>, quo scribitur Apocalypsis...*).

Worauf diese Zusammenschau hinausläuft, ist letztlich nichts anderes als die Feststellung, dass bereits im Zusammenhang der einschlägigen begrifflichen Verwendung von „*intellegere*“ jene grundlegenden Aspekte des Textverständnisses und der Interpretation anklingen, die Viktorins Auslegung insgesamt bestimmen und die als hermeneutische Prinzipien und methodische Strategien unter Punkt II. bereits aufgeführt wurden. Mit seiner vielschichtig angelegten Auslegung zeigt Viktorin, worin seiner Ansicht nach ein adäquates „*intellegere*“ der Apokalypse und worin der eigentliche „Sinn“ („*intellectus*“; „*ratio*“) des Textes bestehen. Und da treten dann eben Aspekte einer allegorischen Schriftauslegung in den Blick. Da treten Ansätze von typologischem Verständnis und einer Überzeugung der Erschließung der Schrift erst eigentlich durch Jesus Christus in den Blick. Es treten aber auch Ansätze einer historisch-zeitgeschichtlichen Deutung in den Blick. Und schließlich treten auch Christologumena bzw. Theologumena (nicht selten paulinischer Prägung) als hermeneutische Vorgaben und für das Textverständnis implizit bestimmende Größen in den Blick (z. B. die beiden Naturen Jesu Christi; vgl. *in Apoc.* I,1 und 2).

V. THEORIE DER REKAPITULATION – STREIFLICHTER ZU
HERKUNFT UND REZEPTION

Fragt man nach den Ursprüngen der Rekapitulationstheorie bei Viktorin, wird man am Ende wahrscheinlich von einem genuinen, gleichermaßen originären wie originellen Ansatz des Bischofs von Pettau sprechen dürfen²⁰, der sich schlicht aus der Textbeobachtung selbst und der Aufmerksamkeit für spezifische Textstrukturen generiert und in einem engen Sinn eben jene Bereiche der Johannesoffenbarung betrifft, für die sich eine derartige Schlussfolgerung durchaus auch nahelegt.

Des Öfteren wird für Viktorins Rekapitulationstheorie aber ein Bezug zu Irenäus von Lyon (ca. 135-200) und der von Irenäus in seinem Werk *Adversus haereses* breit thematisierten Theorie der Rekapitulation postuliert. Dass Viktorin von Pettau die Schriften des Irenäus kennt und diese für seinen Apokalypsekommentar zu Rate zieht, wird spätestens bei seiner symbolischen Deutung der vier Lebewesen vor dem Thron Gottes auf die vier Evangelien offensichtlich (*in Apoc.* IV,4; vgl. Irenäus, *Haer.* III,11,8)²¹. Ob das auch für die Rekapitulationstheorie des Irenäus gilt, bleibt aus meiner Sicht aber mehr als fraglich. Die üblicherweise für beide gleichlautend gebrauchte Begrifflichkeit täuscht jedenfalls: Für Viktorin trifft sie – wie eingangs schon angemerkt – ja eigentlich von vornherein nicht zu; er spricht von „*repetere*“, „*Repetition*“, anders als Irenäus, der tatsächlich und häufig von „*recapitulare*“, „*recapitulatio*“ bzw. ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις spricht (vgl. Eph 1,10). „Theorie der Rekapitulation“ passt als Terminus also eigentlich zuallererst zu Irenäus von Lyon und nicht zu Viktorin von Pettau.

Bei genauerer Betrachtung ergeben sich auch in der Sache deutliche Differenzen zwischen den beiden Rekapitulationstheorien. Während Rekapitulation oder besser: *Repetition* bei Viktorin ein formales, gleichwohl geistbedingtes Prinzip zur Beschreibung der Erzähl- und Darstellungsweise der Johannesapokalypse ist und primär auch auf diese neutestamentliche Schrift, vielleicht sogar auf bestimmte Textabschnitte in ihr begrenzt bleibt, ist Rekapitulation bei Irenäus in unterschiedlichen Spielarten – als intentionale oder reale Rekapitulation, als Restauration des Urzustandes und Entsprechung dazu, als kumulative Zusammenfassung des Bisherigen oder als Neuansatz der kontinuierlichen Heilsgeschichte – als ein grundlegendes

20. Vgl. DULAËY, *Victorin de Poetovio* I (Anm. 2), S. 103; insgesamt dazu S. 100-105.

21. Vgl. auch die positive Deutung des ersten Reiters in Offb 6,1-2 (*in Apoc* VI,1; vgl. Irenäus, *Haer.* IV,21,3) oder den Verweis auf die Abfassung der Apokalypse unter Kaiser Domitian (*in Apoc* XIII,2; vgl. Irenäus, *Haer.* V,30,3). Insgesamt dazu vgl. DULAËY, *Victorin de Poetovio* I (Anm. 2), S. 280-288.

heilsgeschichtliches Paradigma begriffen, das sich in das typologisch-christologische Gesamtkonzept des Irenäus einfügt, vom Inkarnationsgedanken her entworfen ist und erst im größeren Rahmen seiner soteriologisch ausgegerichteten Geschichtsbetrachtung und Geschichtstheologie seinen Ort hat²². In der Fülle der Zeiten rekapituliert das Wort Gottes durch die Inkarnation die lange Geschichte des Menschengeschlechts in sich selbst. In *Haer.* III,16,6 – um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen – schreibt Irenäus: „...und Christus Jesus ist ein einziger, unser Herr, der die gesamte Heilsordnung durchschritten und alles in sich zusammengefasst hat“ (...*et unus Christus Iesus dominus noster, veniens per universam dispositionem et omnia in semetipsum recapitulans*)²³. Die Theorie des Irenäus greift auf eine weit grundsätzlichere, inhaltlich-theologische Weise auf die gesamte Schrift aus, anders, als es bei Viktorin von Pettau der Fall ist, jedenfalls dort der Fall ist, wo Viktorin von Repetition spricht²⁴. Wenn Giancarlo Pani etwa behauptet, dass Viktorin das Prinzip des Irenäus nicht nur bekannt gewesen sei, sondern dass er es auch rezipiert, wenn auch auf neuartige Weise rezipiert und fortgeschrieben habe und darin dann letztlich auch wieder von Irenäus zu unterscheiden sei²⁵,

22. Vgl. insgesamt dazu z. B. E. SCHARL, *Recapitulatio mundi: Der Rekapitulationsbegriff des heiligen Irenäus und seine Anwendung auf die Körperwelt* (Freiburger theologische Studien, 60), Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 1941; C.R. SMITH, *Chiliasm and Recapitulation in the Theology of Irenaeus*, in *VigChr* 48 (1994) 313-331, bes. S. 321-329; T. ONUKI, *Rekapitulation und Heilsgeschichte bei Irenäus*, in ID., *Heil und Erlösung: Studien zum Neuen Testament und zur Gnosis* (WUNT, 165), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004, 331-385, bes. S. 332-356. Vgl. auch I.L.E. RAMELLI, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (SupplVigChr, 120), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2013, S. 89-107, die die Rekapitulationstheorie des Irenäus als ein zentrales Element im Rahmen der Wurzeln (auf dem Weg hin zu) der Apokatastasis-Lehre des Origenes abhandelt: „Irenaeus’s ἀνακαταστάσις here is very similar to what Origen’s ἀποκατάστασις will be“ (*ibid.*, S. 104).

23. Text und Übersetzung: *Irenäus von Lyon, Adversus Haereses/Gegen die Häresien III, übersetzt und eingeleitet von N. BROX* (Fontes Christiani, 8/3), Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 1995, S. 200-201. Vgl. neben zahlreichen anderen Stellen insbesondere z. B. auch Irenäus, *Haer.* III,18,1; III,22,3; V,20,2; V,21,1; V,23,2.

24. Anders und weit eher ist ein Verständnis im Sinne der Rekapitulationstheorie des Irenäus bei Viktorin vielleicht dort greifbar, wo von Erfüllung der Schrift bzw. der Prophetie in Christus die Rede ist (vgl. in *Apoc.* IV,5: *Nisi enim quae praedixerant prophetae in Christo essent consummata...*; vgl. auch in *Apoc.* V,2) oder wenn in *Fabr* 9 Christus mit Adam in Beziehung gesetzt wird (*Vt Adam illum per septimanam reformauerit atque uniuersae creaturae suae subuenerit, natiuitate filii sui Iesu Christi domini nostri factum est...*). Darauf verweist auch DULAËY, *Victorin de Poetouio I* (Anm. 2), S. 103-104, 282-283, 287, wenn sie feststellt, „la théorie de la récapitulation n’est pas sans lien profond avec la doctrine théologique du même nom, dont on verra que Victorin l’a reprise à Irénée“ (*ibid.*, S. 103), und in *Fabr* 9 die Idee durch das bei Tertullian und der lateinischen Tradition diesbezüglich gebrauchte „reformare“ aufgegriffen sieht (vgl. *ibid.*, S. 287).

25. Vgl. PANI, *Vittorino di Petouio* (Anm. 7), S. 172-175.

dann täuscht das meines Erachtens über den prinzipiellen Unterschied in der Sache selbst hinweg.

Mit Rekapitulation bzw. Repetition als Darstellungs- und Kompositionsprinzip formuliert Viktorin eine Einsicht und Überzeugung, die vor ihm so noch nicht begegnet, allein vielleicht schon deshalb nicht, weil Überlegungen zur Komposition der Johannesapokalypse bislang keine Rolle spielten. Andererseits würde es wohl auch zu weit gehen zu behaupten, dass Viktorin sein hermeneutisches Prinzip als ein Gliederungsschema verstanden hätte, zumal er ja primär „eine Konzentration auf die Bedeutung des Gesehenen“ fordert, die es letztlich „erübrige, eine geregelte Reihenfolge (,ordo‘)“²⁶ im Erzählverlauf der Johannesoffenbarung herzustellen.

Spätestens durch die von Hieronymus überarbeitete und um vermeintliche chiliastische Züge bereinigte Version seines Apokalypsekommmentar aus dem Jahr 398 n. Chr. gewinnt Viktorins Theorie der Rekapitulation erheblichen Einfluss auf die weitere Auslegung der Johannesoffenbarung jedenfalls bis hinauf ins Mittelalter²⁷. Der nordafrikanische Theologe Ticonius (2. Hälfte 4. Jh.) bringt das von Viktorin konstatierte Prinzip in seinem *Liber regularum* auf den Begriff und beschreibt mit seiner 6. Regel „*De recapitulatione*“ zugleich ein literarisches Verfahren und eine Interpretationsregel, die es ihm bei der Auslegung der Apokalypse erlauben, „methodisch den Gang der dort in Visionen niedergeschriebenen Ereignisse ähnlich frei zu behandeln wie Victorin“²⁸ und wie bei diesem letztlich nichts zu tun

26. M. KARRER, *Johannesoffenbarung*. Teilband 1: *Offb 1,1–5,14* (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 24/1), Ostfildern, Patmos; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017, S. 103.

27. Vgl. C.R. KOESTER, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Yale Bible, 38A), New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2014, S. 33: „The idea that Revelation recapitulates the same message multiple times would inform commentaries on the book until the thirteenth century, and it would influence interpreters again beginning in the mid-twentieth century“.

28. G. KRETSCHMAR, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: Die Geschichte ihrer Auslegung im 1. Jahrtausend* (Calwer theologische Monographien. Systematische Theologie und Kirchengeschichte, 9), Stuttgart, Calwer, 1985, S. 98-99. Vgl. BOUSSET, *Offenbarung* (Anm. 12), S. 59-60; G. MAIER, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche* (WUNT, 25), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1981, S. 122; K.B. STEINHAUSER, *Recapitulatio in Tyconius and Augustin*, in *Augustinian Studies* 15 (1984) 1-5; G. DORIVAL, *Nouvelles remarques sur la forme du Traité des Principes d'Origène*, in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 22 (1987) 67-108, S. 106; M. DULAËY, *La sixième Règle de Tyconius et son résumé dans le De doctrina christiana*, in *REAug* 35 (1989) 83-103 (zu entsprechenden Passagen aus seinem Apokalypsekommmentar vgl. *ibid.*, S. 95-99). – Ticonius geht von sieben „*periochae*“, d. h. Serien oder Sequenzen bzw. Rekapitulationen aus, die die eschatologischen Ereignisse beschreiben. Vgl. z. B. S.M. RYAN, *Praising God in Adversity: Tyconius's Ecclesiastical Exegesis of the Celestial Liturgy (Rev. 4–5)*, in I. BOXALL – R. TRESLEY (Hgg.), *The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters: Short Studies and an Annotated Bibliography*, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, 27-51, S. 34-38.

haben mit dem Konzept des Irenäus²⁹. Bei Augustinus (354-430) findet sich dann etwa in *De civitate Dei* im Anschluss an Viktorin und beeinflusst von Ticonius als Umschreibung der Rekapitulationstheorie die Feststellung, dass die Johannesapokalypse, wenn sie dasselbe auf verschiedene Weise wiederholt, zwar immer anderes zu sagen scheine, in Wirklichkeit jedoch nur dasselbe immer wieder anders sage (*Civ.* XX,17 [CCSL 48, 728-729]: ... *maxime quia sic eadem multis modis repetit, ut alia atque alia dicere uideatur, cum aliter atque aliter haec ipsa dicere uestigetur*)³⁰.

In der modernen Apokalypseforschung hat die Rekapitulationstheorie im Sinne Viktorins und zunehmend auch als Argument der Textstrukturierung ihren festen Platz, wird „nach einer langen theologischen Geschichte ... als literarische Kategorie wiederentdeckt“³¹ und erfährt gegenüber Viktorin über die Siebenerreihen hinaus zudem deutlich ausgeweitete Anwendung³². Adela Yarbro Collins attestiert Günther Bornkamm, die Rekapitulationstheorie Viktorins erst eigentlich wieder in ihr Recht und in Kraft gesetzt zu

29. So mit DULAËY, *La sixième Règle* (Anm. 28), S. 102, die betont: „Il est certain, en tout cas, que la récapitulation dont parlent les Règles n'a rien à voir avec le concept théologique du même nom tel qu'on le trouve chez saint Paul (Éph 1, 10), puis Irénée de Lyon et qu'elle n'est pas non plus influencée par Tertullien ... Le seul rapport entre les deux est le mot *recapitulatio*...“.

30. Wie Viktorin gebraucht Augustinus an dieser Stelle das Verbum „*repetere*“. Vgl. auch die Erklärung der *regula VI* des Ticonius in Augustinus, *Doctr. Christ.* III,36,52 (CCSL 32, 111-112): *Sic enim dicuntur quaedam, quasi sequantur in ordine temporis uel rerum continuatione narrentur, cum ad priora, quae praetermissa fuerant, latenter narratio reuocetur* („Some passages are presented as if their contents follow in chronological order or in a continuous sequence, when in fact the narrative covertly switches back to earlier matters which had been passed over“; Übersetzung: *Augustine. De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and transl. R.P.H. GREEN [Oxford Early Christian Texts], Oxford, Clarendon, 1995, S. 189). Im Unterschied zu Ticonius wird „*recapitulatio*“ bei Augustinus freilich zur theologischen Kategorie; vgl. STEINHAUSER, *Recapitulatio* (Anm. 28), S. 5; DULAËY, *La sixième Règle* (Anm. 28), bes. S. 89-91; K. POLLMANN, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus, De doctrina christiana* (Paradosis, 41), Fribourg/CH, Universitätsverlag, 1996, bes. S. 48-50, 205-211.

31. KARRER, *Johannesoffenbarung* (Anm. 26), S. 106. Karrer weist in Anm. 267 darauf hin, dass der Begriff der „*recapitulatio*“ ἰστορικὴ ἀναμνηστικὴ in der Rhetorik entstand, bevor die Kirchenväter ihn theologisch umprägten. Vgl. J. MARTIN, *Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, II/3), München, Beck, 1974, S. 147, 150-153; DORIVAL, *Nouvelles remarques* (Anm. 28), S. 98-108.

32. Siehe etwa die breit geführte Debatte zu potenziellen Aspekten der Rekapitulation von Offb 19,11-21; 16,12-21 und 6,12-17 in Offb 20,1-10; vgl. z. B. R.F. WHITE, *Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10*, in *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (1989) 319-344; ID., *Making Sense of Rev 20:1-10? Harold Hoehner Versus Recapitulation*, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (1994) 539-551; D. MATHEWSON, *A Re-examination of the Millennium in Rev 20:1-6: Consummation and Recapitulation*, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001) 237-251; C.E. POWELL, *Progression versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6*, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006) 94-109.

haben³³. Tatsächlich beschäftigt sich Bornkamm in seinem Aufsatz aus dem Jahr 1937 zur Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen sehr ausführlich mit dem Aspekt der Rekapitulation und erkennt das Phänomen über die drei Siebenerreihen und die Parallelismen vor allem der Posaunen- und der Schalenreihe hinaus und trotz vorhandener Differenzen im Detail auch in anderen textlichen Gegebenheiten der Johannesoffenbarung³⁴. Auch wenn Bornkamm – das mag überraschen – an keiner Stelle explizit auf Viktorin Bezug nimmt oder ausdrücklich von Rekapitulation spricht, trifft er sich in der Sache dennoch ganz mit Viktorin. Was in der Johannesoffenbarung ein erstes Mal verkürzt, fragmentarisch und rätselhaft geschildert werde, begegne später wieder in gesteigerter, geschlossener und klarer, auf Auflösung bedachter Form und lasse sich von rückwärts, vom Ende her interpretieren. Mit Offb 7,1–8,1 sei die Vollendung schon erreicht, auf die die Reihe der Siegelöffnung, einer Ouvertüre gleich, „in charakteristischer Auswahl“ und „in einer später nicht wiederholten Abkürzung ... zueilt“³⁵. Die Entsprechungen zu Viktorin sind – nicht zuletzt auch in der Diktion – nicht zu überhören.

Im Kontext ihrer eigenen Studien zu „thematic patterns“ und „plot“ der Johannesoffenbarung wendet Adela Yarbro Collins das Prinzip der Rekapitulation selbst intensiv und umfassend an. Die Gesamtkomposition des apokalyptischen Hauptteils (Offb 6,1–22,5) gestaltet sich ihrer Ansicht nach in fünf Teilabschnitten („series“), die jede für sich dasselbe dreifache Abfolgeschema eschatologischer Ereignisse rekapituliere: die Verfolgung der im Glauben Treuen, die Bestrafung der Gegner und den Triumph Gottes, des Lammes und der Gläubigen³⁶. Die Visionssequenzen in Offb 12,1–15,4 und in Offb 17,1–22,5 werden dabei in gleicher Weise mit einbezogen.

33. Vgl. A. YARBRO COLLINS, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion, 9), Missoula, MT, Scholars Press, 1976, S. 32. – Unter den aktuellen Apokalypsekommentaren kann insbesondere etwa auf G.K. BEALE, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1999, z. B. S. 121-132, 144, verwiesen werden.

34. So etwa in der kontrastiven Entsprechung zwischen Offb 12–13 und Offb 17–18 (vgl. BORNKAMM, *Komposition* [Anm. 15], S. 135, 138-139), in den auf Steigerung und Klärung angelegten Übereinstimmungen zwischen Offb 14,1-20 und Offb 19,1–20,3 (vgl. *ibid.*, S. 136, 139-142), in den Bezügen zwischen Offb 9 und Offb 20 (vgl. *ibid.*, S. 143-144) oder in der umrisshaften Vorwegnahme der letzten Vollendung in Offb 11,1-14 (vgl. *ibid.*, S. 144-146).

35. BORNKAMM, *Komposition* (Anm. 15), S. 148 bzw. S. 147-148.

36. Vgl. YARBRO COLLINS, *Combat Myth* (Anm. 33), S. 32-44: „...there are five series of visions in Revelation, each of which recapitulates the threefold pattern...: (a) persecution, (b) punishment of the nations, and (c) triumph of God, the Lamb, or the faithful“ (S. 33). – Vgl. etwa auch den Aufweis rekurrerender Handlungslinien bei GIBLIN, *Recapitulation* (Anm. 18), und seinen Kommentar zur Apokalypse: C.H. GIBLIN, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Good News Studies, 34), Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1991.

Es gibt freilich auch andere Stimmen. Marko Jauhiainen beispielsweise sieht trotz der strukturellen Gemeinsamkeiten und wiederholt begegnender Motive in den drei Siebenerreihen der Johannesapokalypse keine zwingende Notwendigkeit, hier insgesamt von Rekapitulation zu sprechen. Seiner Ansicht nach legt der Text in seiner konkreten Gestalt vielmehr die Schlussfolgerung nahe, dass Johannes in guter apokalyptischer Manier weit mehr Interesse an einer chronologischen Abfolge der endzeitlichen Ereignisse bis hin zum ultimativen Tag des Herrn gehabt habe, als es ihm üblicherweise in der kritischen Forschung und in der Kommentierung seiner Schrift zugestanden werde³⁷.

VI. RESÜMEE

Mit der Theorie der Rekapitulation begegnet im Apokalypsekommentar des Viktorin von Pettau ein grundlegendes hermeneutisches Prinzip, das dieser in seinem Werk nicht nur ausdrücklich thematisiert und reflektiert, sondern das entsprechend auch seinen Niederschlag in der Art und Weise der Kommentierung und in ihren Resultaten findet. Anders als das Prinzip der Einheit der beiden Testamente scheint jenes der Rekapitulation zunächst ganz aus dem Text der Apokalypse generiert und für ein angemessenes Textverständnis derselben konzipiert zu sein. Es wäre interessant zu sehen, ob und wie Viktorin dieses Prinzip auch bei der Kommentierung anderer biblischer Schriften angewandt hat. Dazu fehlen aber leider die Quellen.

Viktorin hat mit seinem hermeneutischen Ansatz der Rekapitulation einen der wichtigsten exegetischen Grundsätze zum Verständnis der Apokalypse bis herauf in unsere Zeit formuliert. Obwohl mit Pettau nicht gerade im Zentrum frühchristlichen Theologietreibens gelegen, setzt er nicht nur damit, sondern vielfach auch unter inhaltlicher Rücksicht so bereits in den Anfängen der Apokalypsekommentierung bemerkenswert eigenständige Akzente und legt wichtige und einflussreiche Wegmarken vor. Mit seiner Rekapitulationstheorie verwahrt sich Viktorin nicht zuletzt auch

37. M. JAUHAINEN, *Recapitulation and Chronological Progression in John's Apocalypse: Towards a New Perspective*, in *NTS* 49 (2003) 543-559. – Auch J.L. RESEGUIE, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 2009, S. 54-59, weist Rekapitulation als Strukturprinzip zurück und spricht von „a literary progression with one event folding into another until the end is reached“ (S. 59). Für ein lineares Fortschreiten auf der makrostrukturellen Ebene plädiert auch K.W. LARSEN, *Neglected Considerations in Understanding the Structure of the Book of Revelation*, in *Restoration Quarterly* 59 (2017) 225-233, ohne Rekapitulation in einzelnen Segmenten ausschließen zu wollen.

gegen unreflektierte Deutungsansätze, die den Text der Johannesoffenbarung Wort für Wort als einen detaillierten Fahrplan für den Ablauf der Endereignisse lesen und verstehen möchten.

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FORTUNATIANUS OF AQUILEIA AS A BIBLICAL COMMENTATOR

The *Commentary on the Gospels* written by bishop Fortunatianus of Aquileia in the second third of the fourth century had been thought completely lost until André Wilmart and Bernhard Bischoff discovered short fragments of it in the twentieth century. An early ninth-century manuscript anonymously preserving the full text of Fortunatianus' work (apart from some losses due to material damage in its exemplar) was identified in 2012: MS Köln, Dombibliothek 17¹. In the following years, a number of additional witnesses to certain parts of the text – none, however, as complete as the Cologne manuscript – came to light, and the first critical edition of Fortunatianus' commentary was published in 2017 in the CSEL series².

As the text was very likely written some time before the *Commentary on Matthew* by Hilary of Poitiers, which is usually dated to the period between 353 and 356, Fortunatianus' work now constitutes the earliest gospel commentary produced in the Latin West that has been transmitted to us³. As such, it is naturally of the utmost interest for studies pertaining to the history of patristic exegesis. The present paper will discuss some features of Fortunatianus' interpretation of the Scriptures, especially of the gospels. Given the fact that his commentary still constitutes unexplored territory in many respects, it should not come as a surprise that the following contribution will not reach definitive answers to far-reaching problems; its principal goal is to signal promising fields of further research.

1. On the identification of the commentary, see L.J. DORFBAUER, *Der Evangelienkommentar des Bischofs Fortunatian von Aquileia (Mitte 4. Jh.): Ein Neufund auf dem Gebiet der patristischen Literatur*, in *Wiener Studien* 126 (2013) 177-198. On what is known about Fortunatianus' life, see ID., *Zur Biographie des Bischofs Fortunatian von Aquileia*, in *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 17 (2013) 395-423.

2. *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis: Commentarii in evangelia*, ed. L.J. DORFBAUER (CSEL, 103), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2017. The Latin text is cited according to the line numbers of that edition.

3. There exists as yet no comprehensive study comparing Fortunatianus and Hilary, but see DORFBAUER, *Zur Biographie* (n. 1), pp. 418-420 and ID. (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), p. 3.

I. AN EXEGESIS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS REGARDED AS A UNITY

Fortunatianus' commentary is special insofar as it does not concentrate exclusively on one of the four canonical gospels. After an extensive general preface (praef.), an introductory commentary on Matt 1,1–2,18 (M. long.), which is rather detailed and frequently points to parallel passages in the other synoptic gospels, and after an index of the chapters that are explained in the following main part of the work (cap. M. / L. / J.), Fortunatianus comments on 129 selected sections from Matt 1,17–27,51 (M.), on 13 sections from Luke 2,1–5,14 (L.), and on 18 from John 1,1–2,11 (J.)⁴. All the other Latin commentators of the patristic age that are known to us dedicated their works either exclusively to Matthew (Hilary; Jerome; Chromatius; *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum*), to Luke (Ambrose), or to John (if one wishes to count Augustine's *Tractatus in Iohannis evangelium* as a gospel commentary like the other works mentioned)⁵. To be sure, in the course of their interpretations all these writers frequently refer to passages in the other gospels if this serves their purpose, but their goal was obviously not to offer a comprehensive treatment of the canonical gospels viewed as a whole.

Fortunatianus on the other hand repeatedly emphasises the idea of a fundamental unity of the evangelical account, represented by the four canonical gospels of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John⁶. He clearly assumes that they complement each other, and this conception seems to have guided the

4. Obviously, this structure is somewhat strange. It raises problems concerning the genesis and possibly also the transmission of the text that I will not discuss here; see DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), pp. 55–60. Note that the gospel sections chosen by Fortunatianus to comment upon do not correspond to those of any of the systems of chapter division that are known from ancient gospel manuscripts. They were clearly defined by Fortunatianus himself; see H.A.G. HOUGHTON, *The Divisions and Text of the Gospels in Fortunatianus' Commentary on the Gospels*, in L.J. DORFBAUER – V. ZIMMERL-PANAGL (eds.), *Fortunatianus redivivus: Bischof Fortunatian von Aquileia und sein Evangelienkommentar* (CSEL Extra Seriem), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2017, 215–237, pp. 215–221.

5. I leave aside the lost commentary by Victorinus of Poetovio, the only Latin work of that kind we know to have been written before Fortunatianus and Hilary. It is usually called a "Commentary on Matthew" in modern studies, but there are reasons to think that, similarly to Fortunatianus, it may have treated the other gospels as well, at least selectively; see DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), p. 71 n. 202. On Victorinus as a commentator, see the contribution by Konrad Huber in the present volume.

6. This is the order presented in Fortunatianus' preface (2–29) and referenced later in the text (2856–2862). It may well correspond to the order the bishop of Aquileia knew from his own gospel manuscript; see DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), p. 79, and C. GUIGNARD, *Le Quadruple Évangile chez Irénée*, in A. BASTITT – J. VERHEYDEN (eds.), *Irénée de Lyon et les débuts de la Bible chrétienne: Actes de la Journée du 1.VII. 2014 à Lyon* (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia, 77), Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, 101–168, pp. 108–115.

configuration of his commentary. He does not speak of *evangelium* in the singular when he actually has all four gospels in mind, as Irenaeus does (see, e.g., *Adversus haereses* 3.11.7), following older Christian tradition, but on the whole Fortunatianus' concept of a fourfold gospel appears similar to that of the bishop of Lyon⁷.

In the general preface Fortunatianus pays equal attention to all four gospels and argues that their number had already been foretold in various passages of the Old Testament⁸. In its concluding section the bishop of Aquileia offers an allegorical interpretation of the nut – not the almond⁹ – blossoming forth from Aaron's rod (see Num 17,8): It is one nut but it has four sections, and this “shows” (according to Fortunatianus) “that the four Gospels have spoken of one God, the Son of God, and are consistent with each other; and just as there is one flavour in the four sections of the walnut, so the four Gospels speak of a single power of our Lord and God, even if they have said differing things”¹⁰. Unfortunately, the constitution of the text here – as in many other passages of the commentary – is somewhat

7. On the oldest Christian use of *evangelium/evangelia* see M. HENGEL, *Die vier Evangelien und das eine Evangelium von Jesus Christus: Studien zu ihrer Sammlung und Entstehung* (WUNT, 224), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2008, pp. 2-8; on Irenaeus see *ibid.*, pp. 16-19 as well as GUIGNARD, *Le Quadruple Évangile* (n. 6), pp. 129 and 155-157. On the relation of Fortunatianus to Irenaeus see DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), pp. 71-74, and A. BASTIT, *Le prologue aux commentarii sur les évangiles de Fortunatien*, in DORFBAUER – ZIMMERL-PANAGL (eds.), *Fortunatianus redivivus* (n. 4), 1-46. This subject deserves further study. Note also what Fortunatianus' later successor Chromatius has to say in the prologue to his own *Commentary on Matthew*: *Et quamvis propter numerum evangelistarum quattuor evangelia dicantur, unum tamen in omnibus evangelium est dicente domino 'Et praedicabitur hoc evangelium per universum orbem' [Matt 24,14]. Non dixit 'evangelia', sed 'evangelium'. Hoc et apostolus ostendit, cum dicit 'Si quis vobis praedicaverit aliud evangelium quam quod accepistis, anathema sit' [Gal 1,9]. Unde manifestum est quattuor istos libros unum evangelium computari (prol. 11).*

8. On Fortunatianus' preface, see BASTIT, *Le prologue* (n. 7). See also A. BASTIT, *Typologie des prologues aux commentaires des évangiles*, in E. PRINZIVALLI (ed.), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene: Il testo e i suoi contesti. Atti dell'VIII Convegno di Studi del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina* (Biblioteca di Adamantius, 3), Villa Verucchio, Pazzini, 2005, 83-115, pp. 99-109 on the subject of the one but fourfold gospel as treated in the prefaces of other patristic commentaries.

9. On this detail see R. GRYSOON, *Le thème du bâton d'Aaron dans l'œuvre de saint Ambroise*, in *REAug* 26 (1980) 29-44, p. 30, and BASTIT, *Le prologue* (n. 7), p. 29.

10. *Sic ostendit quattuor evangelia unum deum dei filium locuta ac sibi cohaerere; et sicut unus sapor est quadripertitae nucis, sic quattuor evangelia unam virtutem dei et domini nostri loquuntur, licet varia dixerint* (125-127). All translations of Fortunatianus are taken from H.A.G. HOUGHTON – L.J. DORFBAUER, *Fortunatianus of Aquileia: Commentary on the Gospels. English Translation and Introduction* (CSEL Extra Seriem), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2017; also available as open access publication on <https://www.degruyter.com/viewbookto/product/469498>; translations of biblical verses, if not from the Fortunatianus text, are taken from the Douay-Rheims version. All other translations are mine.

problematic (see the apparatus of the critical edition), but the overall notion is beyond question since parallels exist elsewhere in Fortunatianus' work. For example, on one occasion he quotes the different accounts concerning the election of Peter by Jesus that are given by the synoptics and John: The former speak about fishermen being chosen by Christ, while the latter mentions the changing of the name "Simon" to "Cephas/Peter". Fortunatianus concludes that one should not be troubled by the discrepancy because the evangelists complement each other¹¹.

If the four canonical gospels are understood to provide a unitary account of the life and deeds of Jesus Christ, with all divergences found in one or more of the evangelists considered as supplements to the universal narrative, one almost necessarily ends up with a *diatessaron*-like concept¹². Therefore, it may seem natural for a commentator to take the most thorough report – that is, the one given by Matthew – as a basis for the interpretation and to enhance it by selected details from the other gospels. Fortunatianus probably refers to this idea in an unfortunately lacunose closing line of his treatment of Matthew: "The whole Gospel of Matthew, however, contains everything, because the other Gospels have also spoken of the one Lord"¹³. Against the background of such a concept, it is reasonable not to comment specifically on the Gospel according to Mark, since it contains little that cannot also be found in one of the other gospels. Accordingly, the bishop of Aquileia states, before starting his explanation of Matthew, that "we will, in addition, investigate a few matters which are not told in the other gospels, but we understand the Gospel according to Mark in the same way as the rest because all four evangelists spoke about one God, our Lord"¹⁴. To offer a consistent gospel narrative by using Matthew as backbone, supplementing

11. *Nihil igitur differt variae dictioni evangeliorum, quomodo coeptam rationem singuli dixerint: Tres igitur evangelistae piscatores dixerunt, nominis inmutationem solus Iohannis intulit* (3178-3180). See also 3136-3142, on the differing accounts of Jesus' baptism, especially the conclusion: *Non interest de varietate vocis relatae. Iuxta stilum enim suum quisque describens rettulit, dummodo idem atque ipse sensus ab omnibus sit relatus.*

12. On this topic see HENGEL, *Die vier Evangelien* (n. 7), pp. 45-48 and T. O'LOUGHLIN, *Harmonizing the Truth: Eusebius and the Problem of the Four Gospels*, in *Traditio* 65 (2010) 1-29, pp. 7-13. As far as I can see, there is nothing in Fortunatianus that warrants knowledge of Tatian or any other Gospel Harmony, but his view of the evangelical account appears quite similar to such a work, despite the fact that the bishop of Aquileia also emphasises different core themes of each gospel (which he calls *regulae*): Matthew – righteousness (*iustitia*); Luke – Law (*lex*); Mark – prophecy (*prophetia*); John – the origin of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (*principium fili dei Iesu Christi*); on these, see BASTIT, *Le prologue* (n. 7), pp. 11-16.

13. *Torum autem evangelium Mathei omnia continet, quia unum dominum dixerunt etiam cetera evangelia* (2704-2705).

14. *Adhuc investigaturi pauca, quae aliis evangeliiis dicta non sunt, evangelium cata Marcum, quia omnes quattuor evangelistae de uno deo et domino nostro dixerunt, sic intellegimus ut cetera*

it with material from Luke and John and minimising Mark, is just what Fortunatianus' older contemporary Juvenecus did in his New Testament epic, the *Evangeliorum libri IV*¹⁵.

It has been suggested "that demonstrating the consistency of the Christian scriptures ... was part of the apologetic agenda of the late third century", provoked by Porphyry's criticisms¹⁶. Be that as it may, Fortunatianus, who was born around the turn of the third to the fourth century, probably knew little or nothing about Porphyry, and his choice to comment on most of Matthew as well as on selected parts of Luke and John is firmly rooted in his concept of the unity of the fourfold gospel, an idea that goes back at least to Irenaeus¹⁷. However, problems appear if one takes a closer look at the commentary. First, there is actually some *Sondergut* in Luke and Mark and, notably, a lot of unique material in John that receives no treatment at all, whereas a couple of doublets concerning Matthew and Luke actually do receive attention. For example, there is no interpretation, nor even a reference, to the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple as told by Luke (2,41-52), while Luke 4,38-39 (the healing of Peter's mother-in-law) and 5,12-14 (the healing of a leper) are explained at some length despite the fact that Fortunatianus already interpreted the parallel passages in Matthew (8,14-15 and 8,1-4). This approach results in some remarkable repetition, not only of content, but also of the wording of certain phrases (cf. the chapters M. XXXII and XXXIII with L. XIII and VII). As for John, one could easily enumerate material offered only by this evangelist that is omitted by the bishop of Aquileia.

Second, only parts of Matthew receive treatment. This situation may be regarded as nothing special in so far as nearly all patristic commentators are selective, not commenting on each and every line a gospel contains. Additionally, there are arguable cases of doublets within the Gospel of Matthew itself, e.g. the healing accounts of two blind men in Matt 9,27-31 and 20,29-34. Fortunatianus provides nothing on the first passage but provides

(752-755). The Gospel of Mark has played a comparatively minor role since early times; see HENGEL, *Die vier Evangelien* (n. 7), pp. 72-73 and 78-80.

15. See R.P.H. GREEN, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvenecus, Sedulius, Arator*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 23-36. For a possible link between Juvenecus and Fortunatianus based on biblical quotations see HOUGHTON, *The Divisions* (n. 4), p. 235. This topic perhaps merits further study.

16. O'LOUGHLIN, *Harmonizing* (n. 12), p. 10.

17. Already in Irenaeus Matthew is quoted nearly as often as Luke and John taken together, while Mark is rarely used at all; see J. VERHEYDEN, *Four Gospels Indeed, but Where Is Mark? On Irenaeus' Use of the Gospel of Mark*, in BASTIT – VERHEYDEN (eds.), *Irénée de Lyon et les débuts de la Bible chrétienne* (n. 6), 169-204, especially pp. 176-179 and 203-204.

a significant exposition of the latter. Elsewhere, however, it is not doublets that the bishop of Aquileia omits but unique passages of substantial length, among them some of major importance. For example, he is silent on the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6,9-13), provides no comment on a section as long as Matt 21,42–23,22, offers a lacunose and cursory treatment of Jesus' crucifixion and burial (Matthew 26 and 27), and omits any reference to Matthew's resurrection narrative in chapter 28.

There may be an explanation for the first of these cases. In his *Commentary on Matthew*, Hilary of Poitiers also abstains from explaining the Lord's Prayer, arguing that there are already works by Cyprian and Tertullian on this topic¹⁸. If this truly can be considered one of Fortunatianus' reasons for the omission, it is characteristic for the bishop of Aquileia not to mention the names of his literary predecessors, just as he does not indicate his sources elsewhere. The other cases that were mentioned above are more difficult, if not impossible, to explain. Is it plausible to blame Fortunatianus' omission of Matt 21,42–23,22 on some deficiency in the gospel manuscript he was using¹⁹? And why does he have so little to say on Matthew's account of the crucifixion and the resurrection?

It may be of relevance that the sections that he comments upon from Luke and John all come from the opening chapters of these gospels. Perhaps Fortunatianus' commentary, in the form that we have, was never fully completed as its author originally had planned it. In this scenario, the bishop of Aquileia intended to add additional material from subsequent parts of Luke and John at a later stage, perhaps also complementing his treatment of Matthew as we know it. However, this reconstruction remains pure speculation. Since both the content and the language of the *Commentary on the Gospels* reveal Fortunatianus to be far from a first-hand writer, perhaps we should ascribe the problems mentioned above to simple negligence on his part.

II. ALLEGORY AND LITERALISM

It is no surprise that Fortunatianus' explanations of the biblical text, as those of most patristic writers, are to a large extent allegorical; that is, they operate from the (tacit) assumption that the words of the Scriptures do not

18. *De orationis autem sacramento necessitate nos commentandi Cyprianus vir sanctae memoriae liberavit. Quamquam et Tertullianus hinc volumen aptissimum scripserit, sed consequens error hominis detraxit scriptis probabilibus auctoritatem* (5.1). See J.-P. BOUHOT, *La tradition catéchétique et exégétique du Pater noster*, in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 33 (2003) 3-18, pp. 5-7.

19. As suggested by HOUGHTON, *The Divisions* (n. 4), p. 219.

only have a literal meaning but also a hidden sense that may in fact be more important, and so it is the commentator's duty to reveal it²⁰. One could classify Fortunatianus' allegorical interpretations according to terms like "typological", "moral", "anagogical" etc., but it seems clear that the bishop of Aquileia was not aware of any strict "system of senses" as elaborated by other Christian writers²¹. He normally speaks of the "spiritual sense" of a given passage (*spiritalis sensus/intellectus; spiritualiter intellegere/accipere*; etc.) when he wishes it to be distinguished from the "simple" – that is the literal – meaning (*simplex intellectus; simpliciter accipere*; etc.), and he very frequently uses the terms *figura* and *persona* (sometimes also *forma, imago, or typus*) to signal what we would call "allegory" or "typology". He also uses corresponding adverbs like *figuraliter* and verbs like (*prae*)*figurare, imaginare* and the like²². Most often Fortunatianus simply states that someone or something "shows", "demonstrates", or "signifies" someone or something else (*ostendere; demonstrare; significare*; etc.)²³.

The Old Testament is naturally a rich resource for this kind of explanations. In the four rivers of paradise which are said in Gen 2,10 to emerge from a single spring, he argues that it was "shown long ago in figures that there would be four Gospels" because the spring "is our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom come four rivers, meaning the four Gospels"²⁴. In the texture of Aaron's priestly robe described in Exod 28,17-20 and 39,8-13, Fortunatianus recognises "that the order of the Gospels was shown and prefigured"²⁵. Moreover, in Fortunatianus' view, "whatever the Old Testament contains

20. See, generally, M. FIEDROWICZ, *Prinzipien der Schriftauslegung in der Alten Kirche* (Traditio Christiana), Bern, Peter Lang, 1998, pp. XI-XVIII.

21. For an attempt to discern different modes of allegorical interpretation in Fortunatianus, see C.M. KREINECKER, *The Kingdom Parables in Fortunatianus' Commentary on the Gospels*, in DORFBAUER – ZIMMERL-PANAGL (eds.), *Fortunatianus redivivus* (n. 4), 239-265, pp. 248-258. See also HOUGHTON – DORFBAUER, *Fortunatianus of Aquileia* (n. 10), pp. XIX-XXIII.

22. Many of these can be located through the index in DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), pp. 275-284. Fortunatianus' terminology concerning allegory and typology is not unlike that of other Latin commentators of his time, e.g. Hilary's (for which see W. WILLE, *Studien zum Matthäuskommentar des Hilarius von Poitiers*, Diss. Hamburg, 1969, pp. 50-53).

23. See, for example, 1612-1613 (*Fermentum doctrinam caelestem significat, mulierem autem ecclesiam ostendit, farina vero populus intellegitur*, on Matt 13,33), 1744-1745 (*Vesperam consummationem mundi demonstrat*, on Matt 14,15), or 1846 (*Panem corpus suum ostendit, canes autem homines gentiles intelleguntur*, on Matt 15,26).

24. *Quattuor ergo futura evangelia olim in figuris ostensum est. ... Fons ergo iste est dominus noster Iesus Christus, de quo exeunt quattuor flumina, id est quattuor evangelia* (54-57). For this image and its use in earlier writers see BASTIT, *Le prologue* (n. 7), pp. 17-21. A detailed comparison of Fortunatianus and Ambrose, *De paradiso* 13-23 would be most welcome.

25. *Intellegamus in veste Aron sacerdotis ostensum ordinem evangeliorum atque praefiguratum* (92-93). See BASTIT, *Le prologue* (n. 7), pp. 25-26.

figuratively the New has fulfilled through the very reason of truth”²⁶. This conclusion seems to imply the surpassing of the “Old” by the “New”, as the former fulfils only a kind of preparatory role for the latter: “But the Law only represented the character of truth; then, when the time had come, the former representation vanished, and truth stood fixed in its place”²⁷. Such a concept goes one step further than a supposed pattern of (literal) announcement in the OT and fulfilment in the NT, a pattern already found in the gospels themselves – for instance, when Matthew links the birth of Jesus with Isa 7,14, emphasising that “all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet” (1,22)²⁸. However, Fortunatianus does not consistently follow the idea of a merely preparatory function of the OT through the means of allegory and typology, and there are other passages which suggest equal esteem of the two Testaments²⁹. This is just one of the many inconsistencies in the commentary that could be pointed out in terms of both its content and structure.

Returning to Fortunatianus’ allegorical explanations, they do not only pertain to the OT or to supposed connections between the OT and the NT but also to the gospels themselves. In the account of the storm³⁰ at sea as told in Matt 8,23-27, the bishop of Aquileia identifies the struggling boat with the Church, placed in the sea, that is in this world, while the breaking out of the storm symbolises “a time of persecution in which the ship, meaning the Church, is subjected to the waves of the world which are plainly evil orders”³¹.

26. *Quaecumque vetus testamentum figuraliter continet, novum ipsa veritatis ratione adimplevit* (181-182).

27. *Sed veritatis imaginabat lex personam; ubi ergo completum est, imago praecurrens abscessit et veritas loco suo fixa stetit* (144-146).

28. Duly taken up by Fortunatianus 46 (*ut prophetia Esaiiae inpleretur*) and elsewhere. He sometimes offers such interpretations himself, following a pattern of – literal, not allegorical – announcement and fulfilment, e.g. when he notes that it was said by Jeremiah “I shall send fishermen and they will fish for them” (16,16), which “is fulfilled in the apostles, who from being fishermen were made fishers of men” (3182-3184: *Per prophetam sic dictum fuerat de ipsis: ‘Mittam piscatores et piscabuntur eos’ ... Totum ergo hoc in apostolis inpletum est, qui ex piscatoribus effecti sunt piscatores hominum*). The connection between Jer 16,16 and Matt 4,18-19 was already established by Origen (*Homilies on Jeremiah* 16.1; *Commentary on John* frg. 23).

29. See, e.g., 1701-1702 (*Ostendit se praecepta duorum testamentorum, quae ab eodem patre familias accepit, semper servare*), or 1717-1719 (*Unde manifestum est eundem filium dei utraque testamenta diversis temporibus tradidisse, ipsum scilicet et ante per prophetas in veteri testamento locutum, ipsum etiam in novo postmodum per apostolos praedicasse*), each time commenting on Matt 13,52.

30. Fortunatianus’ gospel text read *motus magnus* (“a great commotion”), like the Vulgate. His explanation proves that he was thinking of a storm, as it is explicitly stated in the parallel accounts of Mark and Luke.

31. *Navis ecclesia ... haec ergo in mari, id est in saeculo, habetur ... consurgentibus ventis coepit mare vehementer agitari. Quid aliud iste motus significat nisi tempus persecutionis, quo*

It is interesting to note that Fortunatianus tried to achieve some consistency in this allegorisation, since he links “storm” or “wind” with the subject of persecution, especially by the authorities of the Roman state (referred to as “evil orders”), in other passages also. For example, he understands the rivers (*flumina*) and winds (*venti*) that threaten one’s house in Matt 7,24-25 as “the kings of the persecutors” and “those who obey an evil order, meaning the judges”³².

In many cases Fortunatianus’ efforts to achieve consistency in his allegorisations lead to remarkable repetitions, both with regard to the content and the language of his commentary³³. For example, whenever the gospel mentions “birds” (*volucres*), the bishop of Aquileia states that these are to be understood as “holy people” (*homines sancti*)³⁴; when it speaks of “eye” (*oculus*), Fortunatianus reads this as the (spiritual) “teacher” (*doctor*), especially as the Christian “bishop”³⁵; “hand” (*manus*) he always explains either as “priest” (*presbyter*), as “strength” (*potentia*), or as “multitude” (*multitudo*)³⁶.

navis, id est ecclesia, fluctus saeculi patitur, iniquas scilicet iussiones (1171-1176; the allegorical explanation continues beyond these lines).

32. *‘Flumina’ ... ergo reges persecutorum ... ‘venti’ ... qui iussioni iniquae parent, id est iudices* (1062-1065; unfortunately, the constitution of the text is uncertain). The Roman Emperor is called *rex* also in 2116 and 2544, as must have been common in the colloquial Latin of late antiquity. There are more references to the persecutions of the Church in the commentary, which is surprising given its date. They may be explained through the use of older sources by Fortunatianus, as is certainly the case with his interpretation of Matt 8,23-27; see L.J. DORFBAUER, *Tertullians De baptismo und der Evangelienkommentar des Fortunatian von Aquileia*, in *RBen* 130 (2020) 5-9. The storm mentioned in Matt 16,3 is also explained as symbolising persecution, but of the apostles by the Jews: *‘Tempestas’, persecutionis scilicet a populo Iudaico apostolis futurae* (1975-1976).

33. On repetition in Fortunatianus see DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), p. 81.

34. *Volucres habent typum sanctorum hominum, qui recta conversatione ‘caeli volucres’ sunt dicti a volando ad caelum* (1160-1162; on Matt 8,20 “the birds of the air have nests”); *volucres autem caeli, qui in ramis habitant, homines sanctos et spiritales significat ... qui idcirco volucres dicuntur, eo quod caelum petant habentes caelestem conversationem* (1601-1604; on Matt 13,32 “the birds of the air dwell in the branches”).

35. *Oculum scandalizare dicit, si episcopus male doceat vel malae sit conversationis* (986-989; on Matt 5,29 “if thy right eye scandalize thee”); *lucernam corporis non aliam quam episcopum dicit* (1007-1008; on Matt 6,22 “the light of thy body is thy eye”); *quia de oculis mentio fit, facile episcopum male docentem intellegis* (1032-1033; on Matt 7,3 “why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye”); *oculus, qui est episcopus* (2011; on Matt 18,9 “if thy eye scandalize thee”); *oculus doctor intellegitur* (2040; on Matt 19,2, without an explicit mention of “eye”); *oculi, qui eos cuncta perdoherent* (2212; on Matt 20,34 “and Jesus ... touched their eyes”). Such explanations are rooted in the Greek terms ἐπισκοπεῖν (“to look at”) and ἐπισκοπος (“overseer”, or “bishop”); they certainly go back to an earlier Greek tradition of exegesis.

36. *De manu dextera, quod facile presbyter intellegitur* (989-990; on Matt 5,30 “if thy right hand scandalize thee”); *ostendit manum hic potentiam divinae auctoritatis* (1086-1087; on Matt 8,3 “Jesus stretching forth his hand”); *manus autem potestas aut multitudo intellegitur* (1137-1138;

As tedious as such repetitions may appear at first glance, they leave a distinctively personal mark on Fortunatianus' text and also serve to defend his exegesis, at least to a certain extent, against accusations of arbitrariness that were raised by ancient and modern critics of allegorical interpretation³⁷.

But while it is clear that Fortunatianus aspired towards consistency in his allegorisations, it can hardly be denied that some contradictions exist. For example, a "mountain" is usually said to symbolise Jesus Christ or the Church because of its grandeur³⁸. In two instances, however, "mountains" are explained as "the superstition of idolatry", obviously because Fortunatianus imagined some pagan rites to be firmly connected to cult places on mountains³⁹. Is it possible to justify these widely diverging interpretations by the use of the singular *mons* and the plural *montes*? This probably appears hair-splitting to the modern reader, but Fortunatianus' audience, which certainly was accustomed to the modes of allegorical exegesis, may have found this justification perfectly acceptable. Of course, Fortunatianus' inconsistency could also be explained, at least hypothetically, through his adoption of different sources that offered different interpretations of the term "mountain/s".

Sometimes Fortunatianus explicitly asserts that one and the same thing mentioned in the biblical text can stand both for something "good" and something "bad", depending on the relative context. Thus, a "couch" (*lectus*)

on Matt 8,15 "he touched her hand"); *potestate scilicet verbi sanat omnia* and *manus autem potentia verbi est* (1146 and 1195; on Isa 11,8 "the weaned child shall thrust his hand into the den of the basilisk"; see also 1323-1326 and 2791-2792); *sciens potentiam maiestatis ait 'Inpone manum super eam'* (1288-1289; on Matt 9,18 "lay thy hand upon her"); *manum iam saepe diximus potentiam vel multitudinem esse virtutum* (1315-1316; on Matt 9,25 "he ... took her by the hand"); *de manu Pharaonis, id est de potestate zabuli* (1354-1355; on Matt 10,1, without an explicit mention of "hand"); *manum frequenter diximus multitudinem populi* (1503-1504; on Matt 12,10 "a man who had a withered hand"); *si forte manum dicat scandalizare, presbyterum intellegas* (2009-2010; on Matt 18,8 "if thy hand ... scandalize thee"); *manus autem multitudo est aut potestas* (2788; on Luke 4,40 "laying his hands on every one of them").

37. See, generally, FIEDROWICZ, *Prinzipien* (n. 20), pp. xv-xvii.

38. *Mons quid aliud intellegitur nisi dominus noster Iesus Christus, super quem aedificata est ecclesia* and *'Non potest civitas abscondi super montem posita', ecclesiam scilicet supra filium dei constitutam* (964-966 and 1427-1428; both on Matt 5,14 "a city seated on a mountain"); *Mons enim, in quo dominus ascendit et sedit, ecclesia potest intellegi, in qua idem filius dei praesidet ... Mons enim propterea in comparatione ecclesiae ponitur, quia sicut mons excelsus est et eminet omnia, sic ecclesia excelsa est caelum pulsans et praecellens omnia, habens caelestem conversationem* (1869-1874; on Matt 15,29 "going up into a mountain").

39. *Per montes vagantur, id est variis idolatriae generibus oberrant* and *'In montibus' ostendit superstitionem gentilium, qui per montes et lucos vel cetera avia oberrant varia idolatriae superstitione* (2023-2024 and 2383-2385; the first on Matt 18,12 "in the mountains"; for the second see the note on line 2383 in the apparatus of DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* [n. 2]).

may symbolise “weakness” or “rest”, and when Matthew mentions it in connection to a paralysed man, it must be taken as the former⁴⁰. Not untypically for the bishop of Aquileia, he returns to the ambiguous meaning of *lectus* later in his commentary, but this time he states that *lectus* can stand both for “tribulation” or “rest”, failing to discuss or even mention the disagreement with his previous explanation⁴¹. Elsewhere, Fortunatianus deduces from two apparently conflicting statements made by Jesus on *pecunia* (“money”) that this term must signify both divine commandments (positively) and those made by men (negatively)⁴².

Although Fortunatianus takes the allegorical significance of the biblical text for granted and never really discusses the theoretical background of his own exegesis through allegorisation, there are a couple of places in which he explicitly reminds his readers that what they read in the Scriptures is literally true, notwithstanding the fact that a “spiritual” understanding is also possible⁴³. At least in one place it seems that the bishop of Aquileia is concerned with a detail of the biblical account that he expects his readers to question and that maybe he himself found hard to believe – the various natural phenomena after Jesus’ crucifixion, especially the splitting of rocks (see Matt 27,51): “All this truly took place, but it also showed that it would come to pass that anyone who was hard of heart would be split, meaning that their heart would be opened so that they believed”⁴⁴.

In some places Fortunatianus explicitly states that in his opinion a literal understanding of the biblical text is impossible. This may prompt him to offer an allegorical interpretation, as in the case of Matt 5,29-30 and 18,8-9

40. *Lectus aut infirmitas aut requies accipitur. Sed quia hic ‘paralyticum’ dicit, infirmitatem populi Iudaici ostendit* (1231-1232; on Matt 9,2).

41. *Lectus duplicem habet intellectum: Nam aut tribulatio aut requies est* (2456-2457; on a verse missing from the Vulgate version of Matthew but present in Old Latin manuscripts; see H.A.G. HOUGHTON, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to Its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 159).

42. See 1396-1407, especially: *‘Neque pecuniam in zonis vestris’ [Matt 9,9]: Pecuniae quidem mandata dei intellegunter ... ‘Quare’ inquit ‘pecuniam meam non dabis ad mensam nummulariorum?’ [Luke 19,23]. Sed hic videmus prohibitos discipulos pecuniam portare, unde facile advertere possumus pecuniam esse et humana praecepta.*

43. See, e.g., 3218-3219: *Quod quidem simpliciter factum multis in locis legitur; possumus autem et significantiam rerum futurarum, quae adimpleri habebant, adferre* (on John 1,51 “you shall see ... the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man”).

44. *Omnia facta sunt vere, sed ostendebat etiam futurum, ut quicumque duri cordis essent, finderentur, id est aperiretur illis cor, ut crederent* (2699-2701). This interpretation may have been taken up by Jerome (*Sed mihi videtur terrae motus et reliqua typum ferre credentium, quod pristinis errorum vitis derelictis et cordis emollita duritia qui prius similes erant tumulis mortuorum postea agnoverint creatorem; in Matth. 27.51*); see L.J. DORFBAUER, *Jerome’s Use of Fortunatianus of Aquileia in His Commentary on Matthew* (forthcoming).

(“if thy eye, hand or foot scandalize thee, cut it off”). Since the literal accomplishment of Jesus’ command would result in becoming one’s “own executioner”, the eye has to be understood as a bishop, the hand as a priest, and the foot as a deacon who “should be separated from the body of the Church” in case they are doing wrong⁴⁵. Also, since no one “could bear a plank or a splinter in their eye”, Jesus’ request as narrated in Matt 7,5, according to Fortunatianus, must “spiritually” refer to idolatry⁴⁶. This last example also demonstrates that the bishop of Aquileia readily resorts to allegorisation in cases where other late antique exegetes were able to produce an interpretation without doing so (which is why they are more likely to be accepted by modern readers). Both Hilary and Jerome, in their commentaries on Matthew, present the “moral” explanation of the relevant passage which today seems to be the prevailing interpretation⁴⁷.

However, in other such cases, the bishop of Aquileia does not resort to plain allegorisation but declares that the passage in question can be understood as it stands, although with some additional explanation: For example, Jesus’ words “Let the dead bury the dead” (Matt 8,22), according to Fortunatianus, refer to “those who are dead to heavenly behaviour”⁴⁸, while Jesus’ statement “No-one knows about the day, not even the Son, but the Father alone” (Matt 24,36) is in no way an indication that there was something the Son would not know equally well as the Father. Instead, it is a demand for “perseverance in requesting and tireless prayer so that he might grant and impart what is requested”⁴⁹. On the linguistic level, it is to be noted that all

45. See 987-996 and 2006-2016, especially: *Quis autem est, qui sibi aut oculum eiciat aut dexteram amputet...? Superest ergo, ut de supra dictis intellegas personis and Quis possit manum vel pedem abscondere...? Hoc enim qui fecerit, ipse in semetipsum carnifex existit. Superest autem, ut, si forte manum dicat scandalizare, presbyterum intellegas.*

46. See 1021-1033, especially: *Quis enim trabem vel festucam in oculo suo possit gestare? Superest ergo, ut spiritaliter intellegas trabem iuxta dictum Ieremiae scribentis de idolatria.*

47. Hilary: *Fit enim saepe, ut adsumamus nobis arguendo alios auctoritatem sine ullo propriae emendationis exemplo et medendae caecitatis alienae iactantiam praeferamus ipsi in tenebris corrupti luminis constituti, cum difficile quemquam sit praestare, quod egeat, et optimum sit exemplo potius docere quam dictis. Cura ergo propriae adhibenda est caecitati...* (5.15); Jerome: *De his loquitur, qui, cum ipsi mortali crimine teneantur obnoxii, minora peccata fratribus non concedunt (in Matth. 7.3).*

48. See 1167-1170, especially: *Numquid mortui possunt mortuos sepelire? Superest, ut mortuos a caelesti conversatione dicat.* Hilary and Jerome offer comparable explanations of this passage in their commentaries on Matthew.

49. See 2421-2427, especially: *Quin fieri potest, ut filius diem nesciat, qui dicit ‘Omnia mihi tradita sunt a patre meo’ [Matt 11,27]? Superest, ut se nescire dicat, non quia nesciat, sed ut frequenti petitione admonitus demonstrat.* This may perhaps echo an idea of Origen; see L.J. DORFBAUER, *Bethania, Bethara, or Bethabara: Fortunatianus of Aquileia and Origen’s Commentary on John, with Particular Reference to John 1:28*, in H.A.G. HOUGHTON (ed.), *Commentaries, Catenaes and Biblical Tradition*, Piscataway, NJ, Gorgias, 2016, 177-197, p. 193. Note that Ambrose,

these cases where Fortunatianus explicitly deems a thoroughly literal understanding impossible are introduced with a rhetorical question, followed by a *superest, ut* construction (see the texts quoted in nn. 45, 46, 48, and 49).

All in all, Fortunatianus' commentary is shaped by allegorisation to an extent that is surprising even for an exegetical work of late antiquity. But it is also true that there are a few interpretations that are astonishing in terms of their literalism. We have seen that the bishop of Aquileia consistently takes "birds" to mean "holy people", for like birds "they make for the sky, with heavenly behaviour". However, in his exposition of Matt 24,28 it becomes clear from the context, from the biblical verses he quotes, and especially from the way he explains these verses that Fortunatianus is thinking of people literally flying up in the sky, because this is what has been promised by God in both the Old and in the New Testament⁵⁰. Hilary of Poitiers shows a similar perception of the relevant gospel passage in his *Commentary on Matthew*, but he makes clear that the "holy people" should be understood as flying "in their spiritual body"⁵¹.

Elsewhere, a problem arises not so much from the evangelical account as from Fortunatianus' willingness to accept it. The bishop of Aquileia must have found Peter's denial so embarrassing (Matt 26,72 "I do not know the man"), despite its foretelling by Jesus himself (Matt 26,34), that he proffers a forced interpretation, attempting to over-literally attach a christological meaning to the relevant words: "Peter, denying the man, acknowledged the Son of God, as indeed he had said before 'You are the Son of God, the Christ' (Matt 16,16)"⁵². Since Hilary also offers this interpretation (although he presents it in a more elaborate and sophisticated way) in his *Commentary on Matthew* (31.5; 32.4), we are obliged to ascribe it to an earlier exegetical tradition⁵³. However, at least one Latin exegete of the patristic age not only

in his *Commentary on Luke* (8.34), also links Matt 24,36 (~ Mark 13,32) with Matt 11,27 to refute the idea that the Son would be ignorant of anything the Father knows, and his *qui signa novit futuri iudicii, utique novit et finem* seem to echo Fortunatianus' *qui ergo signa dicit venturi diei, non diem nescit* (2425-2426). On this topic, see K. MADIGAN, *Christus nesciens? Was Christ Ignorant of the Day of Judgment? Arian and Orthodox Interpretation of Mark 13:32 in the Ancient Latin West*, in *HTR* 96 (2003) 255-278.

50. See 1603-1610, especially: *Nam et ipse dominus volaturos sanctos ad caelum velut aquilas in evangelio repromittit...* (quotes Matt 24,28) *et Eseias de sanctis, quod volaturi sint, similiter dicit* (quotes Isa 60,8).

51. *Sanctos de volatu spiritalis corporis aquilas nuncupavit* (25.8).

52. *Negans Petrus hominem confitebatur filium dei, siquidem dixerat ante 'Tu es filius dei Christus'* (2679-2680).

53. See, too, Ambrose's *Commentary on Luke: Et bene negavit hominem, quem sciebat deum* (10.82). This interpretation was perhaps offered in the gospel commentary by Victorinus of Poetovio, if not also in still earlier works.

accepted the biblical text as it stands but also found apt words for this whimsical explanation⁵⁴.

Perhaps the most surprising literalism in all of Fortunatianus' commentary is his interpretation of Simeon's words to Mary: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce" (Luke 2,35). On two occasions Fortunatianus makes clear that this utterance should be regarded as a prophecy foretelling Mary's death by a sword. He also deems acceptable a spiritual understanding, but he presents it only as a secondary possibility, mentioning it in only one of the two relevant passages⁵⁵. Some later users of Fortunatianus' work obviously found the literal explanation intolerable: The first passage was simply cut out of the text in one strand of the medieval tradition, and the second one was manipulated to read *gladio non ... perempta* instead of *gladio ... perempta* in another manuscript family⁵⁶.

Fortunatianus' literal understanding of Luke 2,35 seems to have been very rare in the patristic tradition, although parallels are not totally lacking. Ambrose of Milan apparently knew of this interpretation. In his *Commentary on Luke* (written between 377 and 391), he rejects this exegesis by declaring that "neither Scripture nor any legend tells about Mary having passed away from this life by suffering corporal assassination; for it is not the soul but the body which is perforated by a physical sword"⁵⁷. At first sight it may appear tempting to explain this passage by way of Ambrose's knowledge of Fortunatianus. However, as long as a detailed comparison of their commentaries has not been undertaken, it is difficult to say whether Ambrose actually knew and made use of Fortunatianus. Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion* (ca. 374/378) has a long chapter in which he states that nothing sure about Mary's death can be found in the Scriptures, which is why one cannot tell whether she died at all or, if she did die, how it came to be (78.11). Since he quotes Luke 2,35 in this context, it is well conceivable

54. Jerome, in *Matth.* 26.72: *Scio quosdam pii affectus erga apostolum Petrum locum hunc ita interpretatos, ut dicerent Petrum non deum negasse, sed hominem, et esse sensum 'Nescio hominem, quia scio deum'. Hoc quam frivolum sit, prudens lector intellegit sic defendentium apostolum, ut dominum mendacii reum faciant.* See also DORFBAUER, *Jerome's Use* (n. 44).

55. *Quam [= Mariam] iuxta Simeonis prophetiam credimus gladio esse finitam* (358-359); *Licet Maria gladio sit perempta, tamen in figura eius ostendebat futuram ecclesiae persecutionem gladii post passionem Christi* (2740-2742).

56. For details see the apparatus on the passages in question as well as DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), p. 32.

57. *Nec littera nec historia docet ex hac vita Mariam corporalis necis passione migrasse; non enim anima, sed corpus materiali gladio transverberatur* (2.61). On this topic, see J.M. ALONSO, *La espada de Simeon (Lc. 2,35a) en la exegesis de los Padres*, in *Maria in Sacra Scriptura: Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani in Republica Dominicana anno 1965 celebrati*. IV: *De beata virgine Maria in evangelis synopticis*, Roma, Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1967, 183-285, esp. pp. 240, 251, 261-266, and 269.

that Epiphanius too knew of an interpretation like the one offered by Fortunatianus⁵⁸. Also, from a letter written by Paulinus of Nola to Augustine around 410, possibly echoing the passage in Ambrose mentioned above, it becomes clear that Paulinus was troubled by a literal understanding of Luke 2,35 (Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 50.17-18 = Augustine, *Ep.* 121.17-18; see also Augustine's answer, *Ep.* 149.33). This topic merits closer study.

It remains to be said that, just like in his allegorizations, Fortunatianus is not always consistent in his literal interpretations. The most conspicuous example may be his identification of the unnamed boy who is presented by Jesus as a model of humility leading to the kingdom of heaven (see Matt 18,2-4). In the running commentary on Matthew, this boy is rather vaguely described as referring to Jesus himself⁵⁹, but in the preface to the running commentary on John the same boy is said to be John "the disciple whom Jesus loved"⁶⁰. As in the case of *lectus* mentioned above, there is not the slightest attempt to harmonise the two divergent interpretations given in two passages, nor does Fortunatianus indicate that an actual discrepancy exists at all.

III. REFLECTIONS OF THE AUTHOR ON HIS WORK

Although Fortunatianus' commentary begins with a lengthy preface, there is not much in it that qualifies as "meta-reflection". Rarely does

58. It must be admitted though that Epiphanius is tantalisingly vague in this chapter. See especially 78.11.3: ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐ τοιμῶ λέγειν, ἀλλὰ διανοούμενος σιωπῆν ἄσχω. All in all, one gets the impression that he tends towards the notion that Mary might not have died at all but was instead carried away in her body.

59. *Puerum se ipsum dominus intellegi vult* (1982; the following relative clause *quem accepit de Maria* is odd but there may be some textual corruption here). The idea Fortunatianus hints at is expressed more clearly by Jerome: *Parvulum statuit in medio eorum se ipsum, qui non ministrari venerat, sed ministrare, ut eis humilitatis tribueret exemplum* (in *Matth.* 18.2). See also Chromatius' *Commentary on Matthew* on the same passage: *Denique ipse dominus, ut nobis perfecte ex se exemplum humilitatis ostenderet, etiam ipse assumpta carne effici puer dignatus est, secundum quod scriptum de eo legitur 'Quoniam puer natus est nobis et filius datus est nobis, cuius imperium factum est super humeros eius' [Isa 9,6] ... Imitemur ipsius domini humilitatem, qui salutis nostrae causa puer esse dignatus est* (tract. 55.2).

60. *Iohannis sanctissimus evangelista inter omnes apostolos iunior fuit. Ipse est, cum requirerent apostoli, quisnam eorum maior esset, quem tenuit dominus dicens 'Quicumque non fuerit conversus sicut puer hic' et cetera. Ipse est, qui super pectus domini recumbebat; ipse est, quem prae ceteris diligebat Iesus* (2852-2855). This may ultimately go back to a passage in Origen's *Commentary on Matthew* 13.14 exposing Matt 18,1-4 (ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ἰωάννης ἀνέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ στῆθος αὐτοῦ δι' ἀγάπην, καὶ ἀκόλουθον πρὸ τοῦ δείπνου τιμῆς ἐξαιρέτου σύμβολα πολλὰ αὐτοῦς ἐωρακέναι πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ). It should be noted that Fortunatianus identifies John the apostle with the evangelist of the same name.

the bishop of Aquileia speak about himself (never as far as his historical “persona” is concerned), and he provides no or only scant information concerning the sources, composition, aim, or methodology of his work⁶¹. As frustrating as this may appear to the modern reader, much the same holds true, e.g., for the prologue to the *Commentary on Matthew* by Fortunatianus’ successor Chromatius and also for the introductory sections of other comparable works of the patristic age, at least in the Latin West⁶². Latin authors of commentaries on biblical books rarely used the prefaces of their works to communicate much about themselves or the theoretical background of their exegetical work⁶³.

One possible way to gain information on the “persona” of a commentary’s author and on his thoughts is to examine those passages in which he speaks in the first person (singular or plural). However, in the case of Fortunatianus’ *Commentary on the Gospels*, such passages are few in number, and they do not amount to much of interest. We can leave aside all cases in which the bishop of Aquileia merely reminds the reader that he has already mentioned this or that, using first-person phrases like *ut dixi* (274; 1279; 2897-2898) and others. We can equally leave aside all references pertaining to issues to be treated later on⁶⁴. Lastly, we may ignore all instances of first-person plural verbs where Fortunatianus seems to have used them to indicate a certain bond of comprehension between himself and his readers (*pluralis auctoris*)⁶⁵.

The remaining instances of first-person verbs are very small in number. On one occasion, Fortunatianus states that he is tackling the interpretation of the different beginnings chosen by Matthew and Luke for their gospels only “with quite some anxiety and trepidation”⁶⁶. In a similar context, he emphasises his efforts to come up with a correct exposition, which is only

61. See also BASTIT, *Le prologue* (n. 7), pp. 2-3.

62. See BASTIT, *Typologie* (n. 8), for what one may expect to find in the prefaces of patristic gospel commentaries.

63. The preface to Jerome’s *Commentary on Matthew* gives information both on its writer and its addressee Eusebius of Cremona, the circumstances of its composition, its sources, and its exegetical method. This constitutes an exception to the rule. On this work see J.N.D. KELLY, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, London, Duckworth, 1975, pp. 222-225; on its use of Fortunatianus, see DORFBAUER, *Jerome’s Use* (n. 44).

64. See, e.g., *Incipiemus plenius exponere capitulum tertium* (384-385), or *Quod in sua lectione ostendam* (865).

65. See, e.g. lines 1398-1399 quoted above in n. 42 (*videmus ... advertere possumus*), or *Infinitam claritatem debemus intellegere* (378-379), or *Duo genera puerorum in scripturis invenimus* (1475).

66. See 177-178 (*Satis anxie satisque trepidanter, cur sanctissimus Matheus tali usus sit principio, exponere adgredior*).

possible with the help of God⁶⁷. There is no need to see only an empty *topos* here⁶⁸. The bishop of Aquileia might well have experienced a genuine difficulty on the relevant subject, and the discussion in question is by far the longest and most elaborate in the whole of his commentary. He clearly put a lot of work into it.

In a few places, Fortunatianus seems to use first-person verbs to emphasise his personal conviction on certain details of interpretation which – we may surmise – were controversial or which he thought likely to be received by his readers with some reservation. Such is the case when he defends Joseph against the suspicion of having had intercourse with Mary after the birth of Jesus (because Matt 1,25 reads *non cognovit eam 'donec' peperit filium*). This is unthinkable, Fortunatianus says, since Joseph was both visited by an angel and received instructions in a vision (see Matt 1,20-23); according to the bishop of Aquileia, such things happen exclusively to “holy and chaste men”⁶⁹. This justification is found neither in Hilary nor in Jerome nor in Chromatius, so it may well be an invention, and certainly the personal opinion, of Fortunatianus.

Caution is advised on the question of originality, however, because in another place the author’s use of the first person – even of the same verb – cannot possibly reflect his own interpretive invention. In his exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25,1-13), Fortunatianus uses *puto* to express an allegorical interpretation of the Ten Virgins as the Ten Commandments⁷⁰. This idea is also found in Hilary’s *Commentary on Matthew* (27.3), as well as in other patristic texts⁷¹. Accordingly, it must be somewhat earlier than Fortunatianus’ and Hilary’s exegetical works. Most interestingly, Fortunatianus’ curiously literal explanation of Luke 2,35, mentioned above, also belongs to the few passages in which he uses a first-person verb. Here it would be especially important to know exactly why the bishop of

67. See 218-221 (*Diligentius ratione ... requisita et magna cum sollicitudine discussa ... mysterium adiuvante deo patefiet, testimoniis scilicet ad hanc rem pertinentibus contractatis et perquisitis*).

68. See, generally, E.R. CURTIUS, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, Tübingen, Francke, 111993, pp. 93-94 (“Eine Sonderform der ‘affektierten Bescheidenheit’ ist die Versicherung, der Autor gehe nur ‘zitternd’, ‘angstvoll’, ‘mit Zittern und Beben’ an sein Werk”).

69. *Angelos enim sanctis et pudicis viris semper apparuisse manifestum est. Igitur nisi Ioseph in sanctimoniae itinere gressus firmiter habuisset constitutos, numquam puto eum angelorum visiones videre potuisse et, quid agere deberet, eorum insinuatione didicisse* (341-345).

70. *Quia eas similes dixit aestimari regnum caelorum, intellegendum puto tradita decem verba legis, in quibus verbis omnia continentur* (2501-2502).

71. See M. DULAËY, *Les sources latines de l'Opus imperfectum in Matthaëum dans le commentaire de la parabole des dix vierges (Mt 25,1-13)*, in *Vetera Christianorum* 41 (2004) 295-311, p. 298 n. 13 and p. 303.

Aquileia chose to write *credimus*⁷². Is he solely speaking of himself in a *pluralis modestiae* or does he explicitly wish to include his readers? And might this *credimus* perhaps point to exegetical originality on the part of Fortunatianus? While it seems impossible to give definitive answers to these questions, one may in this case deduce a certain sense of controversy with regard to the interpretation.

Equally few in number are the places in which Fortunatianus explicitly states that a certain topic may cause special difficulty or even misunderstanding for the reader. This is the case with Matt 1,12-17, the third and last part of the “book of the generation of Jesus Christ” in which the evangelist famously enumerates thirteen generations before concluding: “from the transmigration of Babylon to Christ are fourteen generations”. The numerical divergence, Fortunatianus admits, may well strike readers with “a certain uneasiness ... as if Matthew were accused as the defendant of a lie or the remover of one generation”⁷³. It is this very problem that leads the bishop of Aquileia to explicitly seek the help of God, as we have mentioned before⁷⁴. Clearly, he not only expected other readers to hesitate on this discrepancy, but he also perceived a serious issue himself⁷⁵, and – as already stated – he dedicated much effort and space on the treatment of this subject.

The other place in which Fortunatianus explicitly points to potential misunderstandings on the part of the reader is his discussion of Mary’s virginity, a subject that we have already seen to have been highlighted by him in some other instance⁷⁶. This time, however, he makes absolutely clear that he himself does not see any real cause for a possible misunderstanding in the words of the evangelist and that in his opinion “only those of the flesh, not those of the spirit” are likely to perceive an error⁷⁷. When we examine Fortunatianus’ language, it is curious that he uses the phrase *scrupulum incutere* here, just as he did in lines 267-268 discussed immediately above.

72. See n. 55 for the full sentence.

73. *Sed quia novissima summa a transmigracione Babylionis usque ad Christum dixerit generationes quattuordecim, et tredecim inveniuntur, scrupulum quoddam legentibus incutit, quasi Matheus vel mendacii reus vel subtractor unius generationis arguitur, cum praescriptus numerus non totus inveniatur* (267-269). On this subject, see C. GUIGNARD, *Les généalogies évangéliques de Jésus dans le commentaire de Fortunatien*, in DORFBAUER – ZIMMERL-PANAGL (eds.), *Fortunatianus redivivus* (n. 4), 161-214.

74. See n. 67.

75. This is why he again emphasises the care with which he approached the issue: *Ideo necesse est hoc quoque cum diligentia exponi ac discuti et veritatem patefieri* (269-270).

76. See n. 69.

77. *Quod autem ait ‘Non cognovit eam, donec peperit’ (Matt 1,25), multis verba haec, sed carnalibus dumtaxat, non spiritalibus, scrupulum incutiunt, quasi posteaquam natus sit Iesus, cognoverit eam Ioseph, quia dixerit ‘donec’* (333-335).

These two passages are the only instances of this phrase in the whole of his commentary, a phrase that is striking due to its overall rarity in Latin literature⁷⁸. Just as the bishop of Aquileia always resorts to a rhetorical question followed by a *superest, ut* construction when he deems a literal understanding of a certain biblical passage impossible, as demonstrated before, so too he uses the phrase *scrupulum incutere* whenever he explicitly mentions the possibility of doubt or misunderstanding of a certain biblical passage by the reader. This sort of repetition is typical for Fortunatianus' style.

All in all, rudimentary “meta-reflection” – because we can hardly speak of “meta-reflection” in the full sense of the word – can be found mostly in Fortunatianus' introductory section on Matt 1,1–2,18 (lines 134–573 = M. long.), supplemented sparsely in the general preface (lines 2–133 = praef.) and in the main part of the commentary (lines 756–3305 = M. / L. / J.). This is hardly surprising given that the prefaces of Latin patristic commentaries were seldom used to convey such information, as noted above, and that the interpretations in the main part of Fortunatianus' commentary are usually very terse.

In a couple of places in the introductory section on Matthew and in the main part of the work Fortunatianus comments on divergent interpretations of various details of the biblical account of which he was aware. These are of special interest because the bishop of Aquileia never openly indicates his sources⁷⁹. For example, in his discussion of Matt 20,29–34 (M. LXLVII = 2197–2217) he explains that the two blind men sitting by the road from Jericho and crying out to Jesus “Son of David, have mercy on us” symbolise the two Jewish kingdoms Israel and Judah that were established by Jeroboam and Roboam after Solomon's death (see 3 Kings 12), an idea that goes back (at least) to Origen⁸⁰. Fortunatianus subsequently mentions a different

78. The only other occurrence is in Tertullian (*Bapt.* 12.2), obviously Fortunatianus' immediate source; see DORFBAUER, *Tertullians De baptismo* (n. 32).

79. For Fortunatianus' sources (of Greek writers, especially Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen, all – it would seem – mediated principally through Latin works, most probably by Victorinus of Poetovio; of Latin writers Tertullian) see DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), pp. 70–77 and the literature cited there, C. GUIGNARD, *María y la genealogía del hijo de David en Justino Mártir*, in A. SÁEZ GUTIÉRREZ – G. CANO GÓMEZ – C. SANVITO (eds.), *Filiación: Cultura pagana, religion de Israel, origenes del Cristianismo*. Vol. 7: *Gnosis, Valentín, Valentinianos*, Madrid, Trotta, 2018, 97–130, pp. 119–123, and DORFBAUER, *Tertullians De baptismo* (n. 32). There is still a good deal of work to be done on Fortunatianus' sources.

80. See his *Commentary on Matthew* 16.10, especially: *φήσομεν ὅτι Ἰσραὴλ καὶ Ἰούδας οἱ πρὸ τῆς Ἰησοῦ ἐπιδημίας τυφλοὶ ἦσαν ... ἀναγε σαυτὸν ἐπὶ τὰς δύο βασιλείας καὶ κατανόησον κατὰ τοὺς χρόνους Ἰροβοὰμ διαιρούμενον τὸν λαὸν Ἰσραὴλ καὶ Ἰούδαν*. On this subject, see also A. BASTIT – C. GUIGNARD, *La polémique exégétique dans les Tractatus de Chromace*

interpretation, but rejects it: “For anyone who wants to say of those two blind men that one is the Jewish people and the other the Gentiles is wrong about their character: from where would the Gentile people gain the knowledge to say *Son of David, have mercy on us?*”⁸¹

This repudiation is remarkable for two reasons. First, Fortunatianus usually prefers allegorical interpretations to historical ones. Second, he addresses issues of Jewish history only rarely. Nonetheless, the reason that he brings forward to justify his resistance in this instance, namely that only Jews could be expected to know about Jesus’ descent from the line of David, appears sound even to modern eyes. We may doubt, however, whether this was Fortunatianus’ own invention, because, curiously enough, the bishop of Aquileia does not appeal to this conclusion when faced with the same exegetical problem in another passage. He explains that the Canaanite woman of Matt 15,21 is “a Gentile” and “the figure of the Church coming to belief from all the Gentiles”, although she too is said to address Jesus as “Son of David” (M. LXXVIII = 1825-1861), just like the two blind men at Jericho⁸².

Such inconsistencies are characteristic for Fortunatianus’ commentary, as we have remarked repeatedly. Without doubt they are, at least to a certain extent, rooted in a somewhat careless use of source texts. The interpretation of the two blind men as Jews and Gentiles, rejected by Fortunatianus, cannot be found in the relevant chapters of Origen (indicated above in n. 80) or Hilary (*Commentary on Matthew* 20.13; see also 9.9). It is insinuated rather than clearly formulated by Jerome, who himself seems to prefer what he calls the “opinion shared by most”, namely that the two blind men stand for the Pharisees and the Sadducees (that is, two groups of Jews)⁸³. However, we find this idea adopted in the anonymous *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum*, likely from the first half of the fifth century, which used much

d’Aquilée sur Matthieu, en relation avec le commentaire des évangiles de Fortunatien, récemment redécouvert, in *Autores nostri* 14 (2014) 245-265, pp. 250-252.

81. *Nam qui vult dicere duos caecos unum Iudaicum et alterum gentilem populum esse, de persona errat: Unde enim notitia populo gentili, ut diceret ‘Fili David, miserere nobis?’ (2206-2208).*

82. See especially: *Mulier Chananaea, id est gentilis, figuram habet ecclesiae ex omnibus gentibus venientis ad credulitatem. Quae, cum cognovisset filium David, filium scilicet dei, quem ex semine David venturum prophetae dixerant et omnes gentes a zabulo liberaturum, merito misericordiam petebat* (1828-1832). A link between these two passages had been established already by Origen; see his *Commentary on Matthew* 11.17 (συνάγαγε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν εὐαγγελίων, τίνες μὲν αὐτὸν καλοῦσιν υἱὸν Δαβὶδ, ὡς αὐτῆ καὶ οἱ ἐν Ἱερουσό τυφλοί).

83. *Plerique Phariseos intellegunt et Sadducaeos, alii vero utrumque populum et veteris testamenti et novi, quod alter scriptam legem, alter naturalem sequens sine Christo caecus erat (in Matth. 20.30).*

older sources, both Greek and Latin⁸⁴. We cannot exclude that Fortunatianus adopted not only his preferred exposition but also the second interpretation he mentions, as well as its rejection, in a somewhat “ready-made” form from a single source, composed already of the commentary of Origen and also another writer. This second source, however, cannot be determined at the moment, nor can we identify the immediate source of Fortunatianus with certainty (Victorinus of Poetovio?). A more in-depth investigation may lead to better results.

Elsewhere, we can suggest some names of rejected source authors, even if Fortunatianus certainly did not use them directly. In his long discussion of the diverging genealogies of Jesus as presented by Matthew and Luke, the bishop of Aquileia asserts that there are many interpreters who “want the genealogy Matthew lists to be deemed as that of Joseph and the genealogy Luke lists to be deemed as that of Mary”, an idea he subsequently dismisses as not compatible with his overall conception of the whole section⁸⁵. The *multi* to which Fortunatianus refers include without doubt Justin ‘Martyr’ and Irenaeus of Lyons, although it is possible that the bishop of Aquileia would not have been able to offer these names had he been asked⁸⁶. The interpretation in question must have enjoyed a certain popularity in the second and third centuries, but it does not seem to have played an important role in Fortunatianus’ time any longer. Here again, he certainly depends on an older Latin source, which in turn relied on much earlier Greek writers.

It goes without saying that such a situation was likely to lead to some serious distortions. To give one example, Fortunatianus is the only known biblical commentator in the Latin West to take up Origen’s exegesis of John 1,28 (J. XIII = 3118-3127), put forward in the *Commentary on John* (6.40.204-207), that tried to emend the transmitted biblical text by changing the place name “Bethania” to “Bethabara” due to concerns about geography

84. *Duo caeci duo populi sunt, Iudaicus et gentilis* (PG 56, 832). The other interpretation mentioned by the unknown author, namely that the two blind men could also symbolise the two parts of the Gentiles stemming from Ham and Japheth, comes from Hilary (20.13); it was also adopted by Ambrose (*Commentary on Luke* 8.80). On the sources of the *Opus imperfectum* see F. MALI, *Das “Opus imperfectum in Matthaicum” und sein Verhältnis zu den Matthäuskomentaren von Origenes und Hieronymus* (Innsbrucker theologische Studien, 34), Innsbruck, Tyrolia, 1991 (uncritical and to be used with caution) and DULAËY, *Les sources latines* (n. 71) as well as the literature cited there.

85. See 157-161, especially *Multi volunt generationem, quam enumerat Matheus, deputari Ioseph et generationem, quam enumerat Lucanus, deputari Mariae*.

86. See (briefly) GUIGNARD, *Les généalogies évangéliques de Jésus* (n. 73), p. 185; and (fully) ID., *Maria y la genealogía del hijo de David* (n. 79), on Justin; and ID., *Irénée, les généalogies évangéliques de Jésus et le Codex de Bèze*, in BASTIT – VERHEYDEN (eds.), *Irénée de Lyon et les débuts de la Bible chrétienne* (n. 6), 83-90, on Irenaeus.

and content. The bishop of Aquileia wrongly explains to his readers that the problem was rooted either in the translation of the Johannine text into Latin or in some error on the part of a scribe⁸⁷. This proves that he himself was ignorant about the ultimate origin of this interpretation. His immediate source surely did not mention Origen by name, nor could one possibly deduce from it that the relevant explanation had been invented by a Greek exegete working with a Greek biblical text⁸⁸.

Of comparably lesser interest is Fortunatianus' discussion of whether the term *virgo* in Isa 7,14 should be interpreted as "virgin" or as "young woman"⁸⁹. This textual problem was treated by a great number of Christian authors of the patristic age and (of course) unanimously solved by them in favour of "virgin". The bishop of Aquileia likely knew the debate through a source dependent on Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses* 3.21.5-6 (Victorinus of Poetovio?) and/or Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* 3.13.4-5. In any case, he certainly did not decide between two divergent traditions of interpretation on this passage; instead, he simply adopted the entire controversy, its argument and its solution, as it was already to hand in his source(s)⁹⁰.

IV. A CONCLUDING REMARK ON FORTUNATIANUS' READERS

What kind of readers did Fortunatianus have in mind when he was writing his *Commentary on the Gospels*?⁹¹ To judge from the remarkable carelessness the work exhibits in its structure and language, we may well assume that it had originally not been destined for a wider public, but rather for some kind of "inner circle" likely to take less offence. This hypothesis would also cohere well with the fact that there is no formal dedication to a certain person, a common feature of many ancient works of literature that enjoyed wider circulation (see, e.g., Jerome's biblical commentaries). I like the idea,

87. *Hic ergo error aut interpretis in Latinum invenitur aut scriptorum* (3119).

88. See the full discussion in DORFBAUER, *Bethania, Bethara, or Bethabara* (n. 49).

89. *Hanc periocham, posteaquam septuaginta et duo interpretes Ptolomeo iubente segregati tamquam uno ore et sermone totam legem ex Hebreo in Grecum interpretassent, quidam ex Iudeis adulteratores et interpolatores scripturarum non 'virginem', sed 'iuuenculam' fecerunt. Quod enim signum facturus dominus diceretur, si iuuenula conciperet ex viro? Hoc naturae consuetudo est. Sed signum dominus repromittit, quia virgo parere haberet Emmanuelem, quod est 'Nobiscum deus'* (321-327).

90. This, again, led to a serious inconsistency; see DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), pp. 73-74. On the patristic interpretation of Isa 7,14 see A. KAMESAR, *The Virgin of Isaiah 7:14: The Philological Argument from the Second to the Fifth Century*, in *JTS* 41 (1990) 51-75.

91. For the following, see also DORFBAUER (ed.), *Fortunatianus Aquileiensis* (n. 2), pp. 60-61.

suggested by Jean Doignon regarding Hilary's *Commentary on Matthew*, that biblical commentaries in the ancient world may have been written by bishops principally for the clerics in their own immediate circles⁹².

These people, holding offices like those of a *presbyter* or a *diaconus*, supported the bishop in his pastoral duties, so it was certainly important for them to know how their bishop understood the Bible. And one day some of them were likely to follow in his footsteps, becoming bishops of some community themselves. Despite the fact that successfully performing the episcopal office demanded a great deal of skills in various fields, there was no formal and specified "clerical education" that would have prepared someone to eventually become a bishop⁹³. The one requirement that all ancient sources agree to be of crucial importance for a bishop is that he be well-versed in the Bible and to be able to teach it, i.e. to explain it correctly to the people. A council at Carthage in 397 even stipulated that primarily those who had been instructed and taught in the Scriptures since their infancy should be promoted to clerical offices⁹⁴. Under such circumstances, commentaries explaining the gospel text and its "spiritual" sense certainly were of utmost interest for minor clerics who hoped one day to qualify as teachers and preachers of the Word of God.

As for Fortunatianus, the exegetical work of his successor Chromatius testifies clearly to a strong bond of continuity between the biblical interpretations of the two men⁹⁵. We know that Chromatius had been a *presbyter* of the church of Aquileia for some time before becoming bishop (see Rufinus, *Apologia contra Hieronymum* 1.4)⁹⁶. Since we also know that he was living there together with his mother, his brother Eusebius, and some sisters, it is not implausible to assume that his whole ecclesiastical career took place in Aquileia and that he became deeply imbued with a sort of "Aquileian"

92. See J. DOIGNON, *Hilaire de Poitiers: Sur Matthieu* (SC, 254 and 258), Paris, Cerf, 2007, vol. 1, p. 20 ("un ouvrage destiné à la lecture de 'frères' qui constituaient peut-être le presbyterium de l'évêque").

93. See P. GEMINHARDT, *Men of Letters or Fishermen? The Education of Bishops and Clerics in Late Antiquity*, in ID. – O. LORGEUX – M. MUNKHOLT CHRISTENSEN (eds.), *Teachers in Late Antique Christianity* (Studies in Education and Religion in Ancient and Pre-Modern History in the Mediterranean and Its Environs, 3), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2018, 32-55.

94. *Breviarium Hipponense* 1c: *Vt primum scripturis diuinis instructi uel ab infantia eruditi propter fidei professionem et assertionem clerici promoueantur* (CCSL 149, 33.4-6).

95. See BASTIT – GUIGNARD, *La polémique exégétique* (n. 80) and DORFBAUER, *Der Evangelienkommentar* (n. 1), pp. 189-192. A full study of this subject has yet to be written.

96. For what is known about the life and career of Chromatius see C. PIÉTRI, *Chromatius, in Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire. 2,1: Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne (313-604)*, Roma, École française de Rome, 1999, 432-436.

exegetical tradition while serving the local bishop(s)⁹⁷. It is well possible that Chromatius' acquaintance with Fortunatianus' work, evidenced conspicuously both by his *Commentary on Matthew* and his *Sermons*, was based on a kind of "exegetical training" received by all clerics in service of the church of Aquileia of his time. Such a *Sitz im Leben* of Fortunatianus' *Commentary on the Gospels* increases its interest for patristic studies even more.

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97. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the biblical exegesis of Valerianus who was bishop in the time between Fortunatianus and Chromatius, and we also do not know whether Chromatius had any direct contact with Fortunatianus.

MARIUS VICTORINUS

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON HIS USE OF COMMENTARIAL TECHNIQUES IN HIS “THEOLOGICAL TREATISES”

INTRODUCTION

To say that Marius Victorinus was a commentator is not exactly groundbreaking. Most of the “Roman rhetor’s”¹ extant works count as commentaries. Before his conversion to Christianity in the mid-350s he wrote commentaries on Cicero’s *De inventione* (extant)² and *Topica*³, later, on Saint Paul’s epistles to the Ephesians, Galatians and Philippians⁴, and probably on other

1. The expression *rhetor urbis Romae*, found in Augustine, *Conf.* 8.2 (CCSL 27, 114), suggests that he held the official position of the city’s *prima cathedra*. The fact that he was honoured with a statue, too, points to an official role. Other bibliographical information can be found in Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 101 (CERESA-GASTALDO, 206-207); *Chron. a.* 354 (GCS 47 / Eusebius Werke 7, 239); *comm. in Gal.*, praef. (CCSL 77A, 6); CIL 6, 31934 (epitaph of his granddaughter Accia Maria Tulliana). Whether the “fellow citizen” (here perhaps: “fellow sophist”), whom Libanius mentions in *Ep.* 1493,4 (FOERSTER, 11.522: τὸν γενηαῖον Βικτωρῖνον τὸν ἐμαυτοῦ πολίτην), is identical with him, remains uncertain, while Cassiodorus’ assertion *Inst.* 1.5.3 (MYNORS, 24.1) that he later joined the ranks of bishops is almost certainly mistaken. For the most fundamental and comprehensive study of the sources on Victorinus’ life continue to see P. HADOT, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses œuvres* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 44), Paris, Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 1971, pp. 13-43; now also V.H. DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 24 (2010) 122-147.

2. *C. Marius Victorinus, Commenta in Ciceronis Rhetorica*, ed. T. RIESENWEBER (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2013. A. IPPOLITO, *Marius Victorinus. Explanations in Ciceronis Rhetorica* (CCSL, 132), Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, though strongly criticised by Riesenweber, may nevertheless also still be worth consulting. See J. ZETZEL, *Review of Thomas Riesenweber, C. Marius Victorinus. Commenta in Ciceronis Rhetorica, 2 vols., UALG 120.1-2, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2015*, in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2016.03.44, who is critical of the sometimes radical steps taken by Riesenweber in superseding Ippolito’s text.

3. On this and several other, partly spurious, partly partially extant or non-extant works and translations (e.g. of Porphyry’s *Isagoge*) see DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), cols. 127-129.

4. *Marii Victorini Opera. Pars II: Opera Exegetica*, ed. F. GORI (CSEL, 83/2), Wien, Hölder – Pichler – Tempsky, 1981.

Pauline epistles⁵. These have (cautiously) been called the “first scholarly” biblical commentaries in Latin (“die ersten wissenschaftlichen lateinischen Bibelkommentare”)⁶. Marius Victorinus applies in them in part the same commentarial techniques as in his earlier, Ciceronian, commentaries. In a first section of this paper I shall attempt to illustrate by reference to a few examples how he is doing this, how his Ciceronian and Pauline commentaries can therefore be compared, and in what sense it can nevertheless be said that in his Pauline commentaries he treats his text differently from his Ciceronian commentaries.

5. For the possibility that Marius Victorinus produced a commentary on the entire Pauline corpus see DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), col. 142. Alongside the slightly later Ambrosiaster Marius Victorinus is the earliest Latin Pauline commentator. According to DRECOLL (*ibid.*, col. 143) this has less to do with a (possible) “theological” (re-)discovery of the Pauline corpus for the Latin Christian world by Marius Victorinus; for “strongly diverging” exegeses of Pauline theology existed before. Rather, the emergence of commentaries seems to point to a new kind of literary genre used for the approach to biblical writings, of which Marius Victorinus is an early and yet already quite advanced exponent. By the time he wrote his commentaries, the genre had been used in the Latin world for more than fifty years; for an overview of the history of the genre see J. LÖSSL, *Commentaries*, in P.M. BLOWERS – P.W. MARTENS (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, 171-187, pp. 179-181.

6. See for this C.P. BÄMMEL, *Die Pauluskommentare des Hieronymus: Die ersten wissenschaftlichen lateinischen Bibelkommentare?*, in *Cristianesimo Latino e cultura Greca sino al sec. IV: XXI Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiani. Roma, 7-9 maggio 1992* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 42), Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1993, 187-207. The question mark indicates that Bammel doubts whether Jerome deserves the honour but thinks that if judged by the standards of his time and discipline, literary rhetoric, Marius Victorinus should be awarded it instead. This nuance in Bammel's argument is not mentioned by S.A. COOPER, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 109 n. 99, who expresses the same view far more clearly: “A strong case can be made for giving Victorinus the title instead if we recognize that there were different and competing ideas of what exactly counted as *wissenschaftlich* during the period”. Bammel had suggested that by Jerome's time literary-rhetorical and grammatical methods alone were no longer considered scholarly enough but reference to earlier ecclesiastical, especially Greek, exegetes (Origen, Eusebius) were held essential too. But in a more recent study A. CAIN, *Jerome's Pauline Commentaries between East and West: Tradition and Innovation in the Commentary on Galatians*, in J. LÖSSL – J.W. WATT (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, Farnham – Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2011, 91-110, pp. 92-93 nn. 8-9 suggests that Jerome's dismissal of Marius Victorinus' commentaries as inadequate may also have been motivated by an attempt to cover his tracks in view of his own strong (in parts verbatim) dependency on Eusebius and Origen. The question, therefore, seems not only to be one of advances in scholarship but also one of “changing ethics in literary production”, as pointed out by T.E. HUNT, *Jerome of Stridon and the Ethics of Literary Production in Late Antiquity* (Critical Approaches to Early Christianity, 2), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2020, p. 36.

But Victorinus is also famous for another literary product, summarily often referred to as "theological treatises on the Trinity" or *opera theologica*⁷, a collection of writings engaging with the central controversial theological question of his day, namely whether God Father and Christ can be referred to as of one being and substance (*ὁμοούσιον*), as defined by the council of Nicaea of 325, or whether their relationship should not rather be spoken of in terms of "similarity" or "similarity of being" (*ὁμοίον, ὁμοιοῦσιον*)⁸. It is generally recognised that this compilation, too, bears some commentarial elements, but these tend not to be discussed alongside those contained in the other works, at least not as a priority⁹. Invariably, it is the philosophical and theological content of these writings that tends to attract scholars' attention. True, the works' commentarial elements are also noted in modern studies, but many scholars tend to judge these by present-day standards of systematic philosophy and theology and deem them a weakness¹⁰, or they do not take notice of them and synthesize, from a multitude of individual elements unsystematically scattered across the works, a doctrine capable of fulfilling more or less what is expected of a present-day, systematic (or philosophical), understanding of theology¹¹.

7. See *Marii Victorini Opera*. Pars I: *Opera Theologica*, ed. P. HENRY – P. HADOT (CSEL, 83/1), Wien, Hölder – Pichler – Tempsky, 1971, the best available critical edition used hereinafter. It is based on P. HENRY – P. HADOT, *Marius Victorinus: Traités théologiques sur la trinité*, 2 vols. (SC, 68-69), Paris, Cerf 1960; the title of which was adopted by M.T. CLARK, *Marius Victorinus: Theological Treatises on the Trinity* (The Fathers of the Church, 69), Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1978. A third critical edition attempts to do more justice to the fact that there are several different works in the collection by referring to them by their individual titles: see A. LOCHER, *Marius Victorinus. Adversus Arium, De homoousio recipiendo, Ad Candidum arianum de generatione divina* (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig, Teubner, 1976.

8. On Marius Victorinus' contribution to this debate see R.P.C. HANSON, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1988, pp. 531-536, the seminal and in many ways still fundamental study; for a more recent perspective, focusing especially on the western (Latin) scene, relevant for Marius Victorinus, see now J. ULRICH, *Die Anfänge der abendländischen Rezeption des Nizänums* (Patristische Texte und Studien, 39), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 244-263.

9. For instance, DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), cols. 124-126 and 143-145 compares the Ciceronian and the Pauline commentaries in view of their "commentarial techniques", but the section on the "theological works" in cols. 130-143 contains no such investigation.

10. M. BALTHES, *Marius Victorinus: Zur Philosophie in seinen theologischen Schriften*, München, Saur, 2002, pp. 2-3, for example, although admiring of Victorinus' insights, criticises his commentarial approach, which in his view ever only tackles individual problems and never offers a systematic summary.

11. See for this approach W. BEIERWALTES, *Trinitarisches Denken, Substantia und Subsententia bei Marius Victorinus*, in ID. (ed.), *Platonismus im Christentum*, Frankfurt a.M., Klostermann, 1998, 25-43, who at p. 43 praises the systematic character of Victorinus' reflections on the Trinity. Similarly, P. HENRY, *The Adversus Arium of Marius Victorinus: The First*

This paper attempts to look specifically, if (owing to its brevity) only selectively, at these commentarial elements in Marius Victorinus' "theological treatises on the Trinity". It sees the latter as a compilation of works with strong commentarial traits, i.e. both the collection as a whole (in the way it is arranged), as well as its – or at least some of its – constituent parts. It argues that by putting forward specific exegeses of certain biblical passages with the help of other biblical but also non-biblical – and even non-Christian – material the work is promoting the *ὁμοούσιος*-concept as compelling in its own right¹², and in support of the Nicene cause in the Latin west.

I. COMMENTARIAL TECHNIQUES IN THE CICERONIAN AND PAULINE COMMENTARIES

That Marius Victorinus used partially the same commentarial techniques in his Pauline commentaries as he had used in his *Commenta in Ciceronis Rhetorica*¹³,

Systematic Exposition of the Doctrine of the Trinity, in *JTS NS* 1 (1950) 42-55, whose view finds expression in the title of his article. P. HADOT, *Christlicher Platonismus: Die theologischen Schriften des Marius Victorinus*, Zürich, Artemis, 1967, by contrast, although highlighting the fact that Marius Victorinus was drawing together the inner logical necessity of the trinitarian relations (17) observed that the collection of the theological works as a whole and the various topics treated in them lack systematic thrust (35). They are not akin to post-Hegelian systematic treatises, or even medieval scholastic discussions of the Trinity, although they are in some respects reminiscent of the latter.

12. See for this aspect the seminal article by C. ERISMANN, *Identité et ressemblance. Marius Victorinus, théologien et lecteur d'Aristote*, in *Les études philosophiques* 101 (2012) 181-190; also M.J. EDWARDS, *Marius Victorinus and the Homoousion*, in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 105-118.

13. T. RIESENWEBER, *C. Marius Victorinus, 'Commenta in Ciceronis Rhetorica'*. Band 1: *Prolegomena* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, 120/1), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2015, p. 13 (cf. n. 2; hereinafter: *Prolegomena*), suggests *Commenta* as title, over against IPPOLITO's *Explanationes* (n. 2), found in the mss tradition. Riesenweber doubts the authenticity of the latter and holds the early reception to be more reliable, above all Cassiodorus, *Inst.* 2.2.10 (103.19 MYNORS): ...*commenta a Mario Victorino composita*... The meaning of *commentum* is not entirely straightforward. In Classical Latin it could literally mean a "compilation of lies", a "fabrication", "invention", "fiction", "falseness", "contrivance", "stratagem", generally the systematic construction of (false) opinions. Only in later Latin it assumed the meaning "interpretation", "commentary". For the latter meaning see A. SOUTER, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A.D.*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1957; and now also R. JAKOBI, *Grillius: Überlieferung und Kommentar* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, 77), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2005, pp. 5-6, who refers to the synonymity of *commentum* and *commentarius*. But it is likely that for Marius Victorinus *commentum* generally still had pejorative connotation, as, e.g., ca. 411 for Augustine, *Pecc. merit.* 1.18.23 (CSEL 60, 23.20): *numquam dicitur ... in ecclesia tale commentum*; but see (ca. 430s) Julian of Aeclanum, *tr. proph.*, praef. (CCSL 88, 115.39): *in prophetarum ... libros commenta digessit*; yet Julian of Aeclanum, *tr. Osee* 1.4 (CCSL 88, 155.241) could also speak of *commenta anilia*. Only in the specialist context of "commenting a text" did it assume the technical

a commentary on Cicero's *De inventione*, has been noted¹⁴. As a "continuous commentary" *comm. in Cic. rhet.* endeavours to cover the entirety of that work. Following a brief preface¹⁵ it comments on lemmata of various length¹⁶, whereby a particular interest in philosophy and logic seems to prevail¹⁷. While in the earlier parts the lemma is mostly cited in full, it is frequently (though not always) missing in the later parts and replaced instead by mere paraphrase. Cross references ("sign-posts") are also often used¹⁸. This seems to indicate that the commentary originated in a "school"

meaning of "commentary". As to the expression *Rhetorica* denoting Cicero's *De inventione*: Marius Victorinus refers to *De inventione* in *comm. in Cic. rhet.*, praef. (7.12 I.; 3.21 R.) as *libri artium rhetoricarum* and *ibid.* (6.8 I.; 2.19 R.) as *rhetorica*. The references in brackets refer to the editions by IPPOLITO (I.) and RIESENWEBER (R.). The text cited is that of Riesenweber unless otherwise indicated. We also adopt Riesenweber's suggestion for the title and the abbreviation *comm. in Cic. rhet.*

14. See DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), cols. 143 and 124-127.

15. Marius Victorinus, *comm. in Cic. rhet.*, praef. (5.4/7.80 I.; 2.5-3.26 R.).

16. On the distribution see briefly RIESENWEBER, *Prolegomena* (n. 13), p. 18.

17. Thus Cicero, *inv.* 1.12 is commented on at length with explanations of different types of syllogisms in *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.9.12-10.13 (55.20-64.22 I.; 43.3-50.25 R.). Trained in Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge* Marius Victorinus repeatedly refers to the distinction between *genus* and *species* and to Aristotle's ten categories; RIESENWEBER, *Prolegomena* (n. 13), p. 18; cf. *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.5.6 (33-34 I.; 24.9-24 R.): *item, genus sub quo multa similia ex eodem descendunt continentur... tertium, illud genus, quo cuiuslibet rei qualitas indicatur...;* 1.8.10 (50 I.; 38.5-10 R.): *genus sub quo similia multa teneantur ... genus qualitatis ... quo uniuscuiusque rei qualitas indicetur;* 1.9.12 (54-55 I.; 42-43 R.) listing Aristotle's ten categories in Latin and Greek and explaining them at length; 1.10.13 (60-61 I.; 47.3-13 R.): e.g. *animal genus est ... ex animali homo, equus, avis ... ex avi coruus, cornix, aquila ... definitio a genere transit in species, specierum uero definitio in genus transire non potest;* 1.14.20 (73-74 I.; 58-59 R.): *optima definitio quae a genere incipit, deinde descendit ad speciem;* 1.22.32 (101-103 I.; 81-82 R.): *ὁ Graeci substantiae et accidenti genus ponunt, sed non bene...* (namely because *substantia* and *accidens* are not in the same way "beings"; only *s.* exists by itself [*subesse*], whereas *a.* only exists in connection with an *s.* [*in esse*]); 1.28.42 (131-132 I.; 105-106 R.): *quotiens autem de genere quaestio est, ex specie faciendum est argumentum; quotiens de specie quaestio est, ex genere faciendum est argumentum...*; for the propaedeutic background (study of Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge* in the context of the study of rhetoric) see also J. LÖSSL, *Augustine's Use of Aristotle's Categories in De Trinitate in Light of the History of the Latin Text of the Categories before Boethius*, in E. BERMON – G.J.P. O'DALY (eds.), *Le De Trinitate de Saint Augustin: Exégèse, logique et noétique. Actes du colloque international de Bordeaux, 16-19 juin 2010* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 192), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2012, 99-121, pp. 103-104 and 120-121 and J. LÖSSL, *The Bible and Aristotle in the Controversy between Augustine and Julian of Aclanum*, in ID. – WATT (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (n. 6), 111-120; T. RIESENWEBER, *C. Marius Victorinus 'Commenta in Ciceronis Rhetorica'*. Band 2: *Kritischer Kommentar und Indices* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, 120/2), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 14, 44-45, 77-78, 86, 100-101, 135-136, 175-177 (cf. n. 2; hereinafter abbreviated as *Kritischer Kommentar*).

18. See e.g. *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.1.1 (12.132 I.; 7.6 R.): *supra ostendit;* 1.7.9 (46.67-68 I.; 34.28-29 R.): *...de duabus rebus dicitur est ... quae iam dudum ... edocuit.*

(or “class-room/lecture-theatre”) context¹⁹. It is often “didactic”. For example, the way in which Cicero builds arguments is elaborately explained²⁰. Cicero is sometimes directly addressed²¹, while other works of him (and of other “school authors” such as Virgil, Sallust and Terence) are also (often explicitly) referenced²². Definitions and catchy lists of basic terms are often introduced. Despite his interest in philosophy Marius Victorinus leaves no doubt that the discipline that he teaches is rhetoric. He identifies himself as a *rhetor*, that is a lecturer in rhetoric, as opposed to a *sophista*, who coaches rhetoric (*apud quem dicendi exercitium discitur*), or an *orator*, who delivers speeches²³. For him the question is not philosophical, that is whether rhetoric is good or bad. He sees it as his task to demonstrate – with the help of Cicero’s text – that which makes good or bad rhetoric²⁴. But he does not mean this in an amoral, utilitarian, sense. His understanding of rhetoric is underpinned by a philosophy, which he also teaches, as part of this rhetoric, a form of Platonism with a strong ethical bent²⁵. One could call it “foundational rhetoric”. Later – after his conversion – this same philosophy was to inform his Christian theology.

Thus, there is a “systematic” and “scholastic” core to Marius Victorinus’ own thought. When compiling his commentary, however, the rhetor cannot

19. DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), col. 124; RIESENWEBER, *Prolegomena* (n. 13), pp. 20-24.

20. *Comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.10.13 (61.89-98 I.; 47.14-25 R.): ...*ad argumentationem Ciceronis redeamus ... primo ... ut supra diximus ... secunda uero ... nunc tertiam adfert argumentationem...*

21. *Ibid.* (58.7 I.; 45.7-8 R.): *Disputasti quidem supra, o Cicero...*; 1.28.42 (132.12-14 I.; 106.14-17 R.): *Facis itaque de euentu argumentum ... doces ... demonstras.*

22. See e.g. *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.43.81 (166.16-17 I.; 136.1-2 R.) reference to Cicero, *Cael.* 22: *Et ideo Cicero in Caeliana...*; 1.27.41 (128.21 I.; 103.9-26 R.) reference to Cicero, *Cat.* 1.3: *Itaque ut melius ... illud scilicet quod Cicero negotio suo adiunxit: nam cum Catilinam diceret occidendum...*; 1.19.27 (85 I.; 67-68 at 68.1-2 R.) reference to Cicero, *Verr.* 2.1.27: ...*locus enim introducitur in quo se Caecilius iniuriae a Verre passum esse commemorat...* and frequently. However, only speeches are ever explicitly referred to (not scholarly works such as *de or.*, *fin.*, *leg.*, *nat. deor.*, *off.* or *rep.*, which would not have been known to students). “School authors”, however, such as Sallust, Terence and Virgil, are often explicitly cited; see e.g. *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.2.2 (15.2 I.; 9.11 R.): ...*sic Sallustius...* referring to Sallust, *Cat.* 1.1/3; *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.19.27 (86-87 I.; 68-69 R.): ...*nam Vergilius Aeneae et mores et facta describit ... in Terentio adolescentis uita narratur...* (referring to Terence, *Andr.* 51). Full lists of references can be found in the apparatus of IPPOLITO’s and RIESENWEBER’s editions.

23. *Comm. in Cic. rhet.*, praef. (7.14-17 I.; 3.16-23 R.); see n. 1 on Augustine’s reference to Victorinus as *rhetor urbis Romae*.

24. *Comm. in Cic. rhet.*, praef. (5.14-15 I.; 5.17-18 R.): *Cicero non utrum bonum an malum sit eloquentia quaerit, sed utrum plus boni an plus mali habeat ostendit.*

25. Cf. *comm. in Cic. rhet.*, praef. (6 I.; 2-3 R.): ...*uirtus est animi habitus, in naturae modum rationi consentaneus ... duobus enim constamus, anima et corpore. anima immortalis est; si immortalis est, a diuinis descendit; si a diuinis descendit, perfecta est ... uirtus igitur habet partes quattuor: prudentiam, iustitiam, fortitudinem, temperantiam...*

be "systematic". He has to deal with an array of only loosely connected and frequently random details that occur in the text. As a commentator he must explain the text and engage with these details. Such is the essence of commenting. The result is a variety of methodological features: Single words are explained through the use of etymology, lexicography and analogy²⁶. Longer passages are paraphrased; citations are interwoven²⁷, definitions discussed²⁸. Elements of specialist knowledge are inserted, mostly rhetorical, but some also taken from other disciplines such as astrology, philosophy and logic²⁹. Finally, alternative opinions are (sometimes controversially) discussed³⁰. One well-known (and notorious) example is a discussion of the Christian belief in the virgin birth, which is cited to illustrate the fact that even "necessary conditions" require an element of persuasion³¹.

When we look at the three extant Pauline commentaries, on Galatians, Philippians and Ephesians³², we encounter many commentarial features and techniques similar to those found in *comm. in Cic. rhet.*, though there are significant differences too. Above all, the Pauline commentaries seem not to have originated in a "class-room" context but from an intensive reading

26. Cf. e.g. *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.1.1 (10.72, 88-89 I.; 5.16-17, 6.1-2 R.): *'inuectam' uero per metaphoram nauis; res publica enim dicitur gubernari ... pax enim a pacto dicta...* Other examples: 1.11.16 (69.158-159 I.; 54.24-25 R.): two types of *inuenire*, finding and inventing; 2.5.31 (185.87-88 I.; 152.31 R.): *uoluntas est, qua uelle uel uoluisse aliquid declaratur*; 1.4.5 (33 I.; 23.25ff. R.): *...uitia uitentur...*

27. *Comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.5.6 (36-37 I.; 26-27 R.): paraphrase; 1.23.33 (104.21-36 I.; 83 R.): citations.

28. *Comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.14.19-15.21 (75 I.; 59-60 R.) discussing Cicero's definition of *honestum*.

29. *Comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.29.46-47 (141 I.; 113-114 R.): *probabile argumentum*; 2.1.1 (179-180 I.; 146-147 R.): *praefatio*; 1.43.81 (167-168 I.; 136-137 R.): five *modi reprehensionis* and four *modi confirmationis*; 1.26.39 (121.168-122.95 I.; 97.24-98.14 R.): astrological knowledge in connection with determining times; for certain elements of philosophical and logical knowledge see above n. 17; for numerous further references DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), cols. 125-126.

30. Cf. *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.6.8 (43 I.; 30 R.): Hermagoras; 1.5.7 (40 I.; 29 R.): Gorgias of Leontinoi; both are already criticised by Cicero; 1.5.6 (37 I.; 27 R.): *Hic Marcomannus errauit...*; frequently *multi*, e.g. 1.14.19 (73.33 I.; 57.26 R.): *Multi enim quattuor [partes orationis] esse dixerunt...*

31. *Comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.29.44 (137.65-138.69 I.; 110.20-32 R.). In the opinion of the Christians, thus Victorinus, the sentence, "If a woman gives birth, she slept with a man" (*si peperit, cum uiro concubuit*), did not amount to a necessary condition (*necessarium argumentum*); for Christians held it to be manifest that someone was born without the involvement of a man and yet did not die: *Nam apud eos manifestum est et sine uiro natum et non mortuum*. He therefore concludes that a *necessarium argumentum* depended after all on persuasion by opinion (*necessarium argumentum illud est quod iam opinione persuasum est*). On the problems related to this passage see RIESENWEBER, *Kritischer Kommentar* (n. 17), pp. 184-185.

32. The three works will be abbreviated *comm. Gal.*, *comm. Eph.* and *comm. Phil.* and cited according to the critical edition by GORI (CSEL 83/2; see above n. 4).

engagement with the biblical text³³. Consequently, they are less concerned with the explanation of a range of different, individual, items but more with a comprehensive understanding of a text as a whole, with its *argumentum*³⁴. They are, so to speak, less “didactic” and more “literary-critical”, concerned not so much with individual questions but with the literary product, the text, and its message, as a whole. A predominant commentarial method used in them is paraphrase³⁵. This, too, has to do with their more literary, less technical character. Victorinus sees as the key theme of all three epistles Pauls emphasis on God’s gratuitous action for the salvation of humanity³⁶. Interestingly, this does not make him focus on the single, prominent, word *gratia* as a key term, as Augustine of Hippo was to do a generation later. Victorinus does not slide into writing systematic theological treatises but keeps to the format of literary-technical commentary writing of the kind he had practised in *comm. in Cic. rhet.* No doubt he had a theological agenda, but he harnessed it within this strict, commentarial, format³⁷.

For example, he identifies the *partes orationis*, e.g. *narratio: comm. Gal. 1.13* (105): *summa huius de se narrandi haec est...*, followed by *argumentatio*,

33. On (the uncertain) context and background of the commentaries see DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), cols. 144-145 discussing the studies of W. WISCHMEYER, *Bemerkungen zu den Paulusbriefkommentaren des C. Marius Victorinus*, in ZNW 63 (1972) 108-120 at 110-112; B. LOHSE, *Beobachtungen zum Paulus-Kommentar des Marius Victorinus und zur Wiederentdeckung des Paulus in der lateinischen Theologie des vierten Jahrhunderts*, in A.M. RITTER (ed.), *Kerygma und Logos: Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979, 351-366, p. 352; W. ERDT, *Marius Victorinus Afer: Der erste lateinische Pauluskommentator* (Europäische Hochschulschriften. 23. Theologie, 135), Frankfurt a.M., Peter Lang, 1980, 86-93 at 90-91; M.G. MARA, *Il significato storico-esegetico dei commentari al corpus paolino dal IV al V secolo*, in *Annali di storia dell’esegesi* 1 (1984) 59-74, pp. 60-65; COOPER, *Marius Victorinus’ Commentary on Galatians* (n. 6), pp. 127-181, at 174-181; S.A. COOPER, *Philosophical Exegesis in Marius Victorinus’ Commentaries on Paul*, in LÖSSL – WATT (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (n. 6), 67-90, pp. 69-74.

34. DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), col. 145 speaks of “Gesamtcharakterisierung”. Already HADOT, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), pp. 289-290 lists *intentio auctoris*, *theologia* and *summa epistolae* as key hermeneutic terms in the Pauline commentaries; cf. e.g. *comm. Gal.*, praef. (95.3-7): *Summa autem huic epistolae haec est: errare Galatas quod euangelium fidei, quae est in Christo, adiungant ad Iudaismum, corporali intellectu obseruantes sabbatum et circumcissionem, item cetera opera quae ex lege perceperant.*

35. This has been studied in some detail by G. RASPANTI, *Mario Vittorino esegeta di S. Paolo*, Palermo, L’Epos, 1996; but see also A. LOCHER, *Formen der Textbehandlung im Kommentar des Marius Victorinus zum Galaterbrief*, in *Silvae. Festschrift für Ernst Zinn zum 60. Geburtstag*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1970, 137-143.

36. Cf. DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), col. 144 and above n. 34 the citation from *comm. Gal.*, praef.

37. It is quite possible that it was this feature that incurred the wrath of Jerome fifty years later, who would have seen in Victorinus a serious competitor, who presented an alternative form of commentary writing; see above n. 6 for the background of this statement.

comm. Gal. 3.1 (125-126): *o stulti Galatae...*, *exhortatio*, *comm. Gal.* 5.1 (157): *qua libertate Christus nos liberavit...*³⁸ and *conclusio*, *comm. Gal.* 6.18 (173): *conclusio fit epistula*. He uses internal cross references, but also, potentially, cross references to other works, including *comm. in Cic. rhet.* and the "theological treatises"³⁹. He explains single words from the context, although these are now theological concepts such as *iustitia* and *fides*, which have a much more important role to play in the literary-rhetorical-theological structure of the Pauline epistles than the technical terms (e.g. *honestum*) explained in *comm. in Cic. rhet.* had played in Cicero's *De inventione*.

The weight that Victorinus attributes to these core terms influences his commentary. Even when he comments on relatively peripheral verses, he ends up interpreting them in light of these core terms and of the theological concepts that emerge from them. Thus, he interprets Gal 2,10 ("...as long as we were mindful of the poor...") in view of Paul's soteriological maxim that justification is brought about by faith, not works⁴⁰; similarly Gal 2,15-16, 5,1-2 and 5,4-5⁴¹. Elsewhere he emphasizes that in faith God works both the willing (*velle*) and the acting ("operating", *operare*). Citations of

38. He comments *comm. Gal.* 5.1 (157): *ergo secundum fidem nos Christus ad libertatem reduxit et libertate fidei liberavit*.

39. See e.g. *comm. Gal.* 1.21-23 (111): *id est iam notum erat evangelium paene omnibus ecclesiis Iudaeae*; *comm. Eph.* 5.2 (75-76): *quid spiritus sit et quam intelligentiam habeat, ut substantia eius possit intellegi*; 6.16 (89): *sagittas frequentissime et in evangelio et in Paulo et in prophetis et in David positas legimus*; cf. *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 1.22.32 (102.1-103.10 I; 81.12-82.20 R.) on the meaning of *substantia* and how it applies to intelligent beings; *ad Cand.* 14 (CSEL 83/1, 31-32); *adv. Ar.* III 1 (191-192): *spiritus ... et verus et deus substantia est ... ac de hoc et in aliis diximus...* (on the meaning of *substantia* and how it applies to God, namely *simplex*: *substantia*, *intelligentia* etc. is all one in God). Note the cross reference here in *adv. Ar.* III 1. Obviously, this cannot be intended for a passage in the Pauline commentaries, but it is nevertheless significant in view of the commentarial character of the "theological treatises".

40. *Comm. Gal.* 2.10 (117-118): *'...tantummodo ut pauperum memores essemus'* [Gal 2,10]. *Ita, si quid corrigendum esset, corrigerent et monerent, si quidem quod addendum putaverunt, adiecerunt. Quid tamen illud 'ut pauperum memores essemus'? In omni epistula sua Paulus ita agit ut non secundum operas iustificemur, sed secundum fidem*. Victorinus' point here is not to dismiss or belittle charitable works but to read the letter from the point of view of its main *argumentum* (and indeed the *argumentum* of Paul's entire oeuvre); see for this also the discussion in COOPER, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians* (n. 6), pp. 275-277, especially n. 118.

41. *Comm. Gal.* 2.15 (122): *...quia ex operibus legis non iustificatur omnis caro...*; 5.1-2 (157-158): *...si circumcidamini, Christus vobis nihil proderit*; see also COOPER, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians* (n. 6), pp. 281-282, 327-330. As DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), col. 145 points out, the anti-Judaism in these passages should probably be understood in theological, not in social, political or biological terms. In his commentary on Gal 2,15 Victorinus equates Paul's and Peter's Jewishness with their (as well as his, Victorinus', and his readers') sinfulness, which consists in prioritising "works" over "faith in Christ" and which is overcome by "faith in Christ" (the cause of which is God/Christ alone; see for this below).

this principle become almost repetitive in later parts of the commentaries⁴². Thus, although he strictly keeps to the commentary format, Victorinus is able to convey a coherent theological message in his Pauline commentaries, a message that emerges directly from the literary structure of the Pauline epistles.

Yet despite this tight approach Victorinus can still occasionally follow a trajectory as in the famous example of *comm. Eph.* 1.4⁴³. After referring to Ephesians as "...that sum ... of the entire discipline..." (...*illam summam ... totius disciplinae...*)⁴⁴ he comments on Eph 1,4a (*ita ut elegit nos in ipso ante constitutionem mundi*) not only about the pre-existence of Christ and the creation of the world but also about the pre-existence of the human souls⁴⁵. But even such "excursions" are reined in by a tight keeping to the key concepts of the letters as identified in the relevant prefaces, e.g. in this case *fides* and *virtus* Christi. The commentarial character of a discussion is thus always maintained and even a bold excursion as *comm. Eph.* 1.4 fits in neatly with the commentary as a whole (and indeed with all the other Pauline commentaries as well).

42. Note in the following examples the lemmata or citations of the Pauline text (in quotation marks) followed by a brief comment: *Comm. Eph.* 3.7-8 (46): ...*quod autem adiunxit 'secundum operationem virtutis eius' [Eph 3,7]: et hoc quoque deo tribuit, ut si quid ego operer, virtus dei sit; comm. Gal.* 3.5 (128): '*qui tribuit vobis spiritum, operatur virtutes in vobis*' [Gal 3,5]: *quibus virtutibus tanta passi estis et tolerastis; comm. Phil.* 3.16 (211-212): ...*quid autem illud est 'in id quod pervenimus?' [Phil 3,16]: quod olim ex meis monitis accepistis et quod nunc a me praeceptum est...*

43. Other examples would be *comm. Gal.* 4.6 and *comm. Phil.* 2.6-11; see S.A. COOPER, *The Platonist Christianity of Marius Victorinus*, in *Religions* 7/122 (2016) 13-19, esp. p. 13 [doi:10.3390/rel7100122], for Gal 4,6 also ID., *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians* (n. 6), pp. 148 and 308-309. For a comprehensive study of *comm. Eph.*, S.A. COOPER, *Metaphysics and Morals in Marius Victorinus' Commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians*, Frankfurt a.M., Lang, 1995; more recently, focusing on *comm. Eph.* 1.4, ID., *Philosophical Exegesis* (n. 33), pp. 78-88.

44. *Comm. Eph.*, praef. (1.1-2); discussed in COOPER, *Philosophical Exegesis* (n. 33), pp. 78-79.

45. *Comm. Eph.* 1.4 (6-10). Through God's *dispositio* the souls enter the world and are freed again from there according to God's will (6). God elects them in Christ *ante constitutionem mundi* (7). They are less perfect than Christ but can become one with Christ through *spiritus* and *virtus*, by turning away from the material world. Still, only Christ can redeem them, they cannot redeem themselves (8-9). *Virtus* of Christ consists in souls' ability to discern and separate life from death, salvation from perdition (9). *Mysterium* is a key concept summarising Incarnation, Cross, Christ's death and resurrection, Faith in Christ (9-10); see for these key concepts (*fides*, *virtus*) also above nn. 40 and 41. According to COOPER, *Philosophical Exegesis* (n. 33), p. 84 such speculation would have been considered heretical after the outbreak of the first Origenist controversy and may have contributed to the obsolescence of the commentaries in the course of the fifth century; for a comprehensive interpretation of the above passage against the wider backdrop of late-antique Christian Platonism see COOPER, *Platonist Christianity* (n. 43), pp. 16-19.

II. COMMENTARIAL FEATURES AND TECHNIQUES IN THE "THEOLOGICAL TREATISES"

Now in light of what has been said in the previous section the question arises whether or to what extent it might also be possible to find commentarial features in the "theological treatises", even though these represent at first glance a rather different kind of literature compared with *comm. in Cic. rhet.* or the Pauline commentaries (on Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians). In an attempt to answer this question I shall first look at the "treatises" as a collection, or a "dossier". Following that I shall, as in the first section, look more closely at individual features, too, and then attempt to draw some conclusions.

The collection of Marius Victorinus' "theological" or "anti-Arian treatises" consists of altogether seven pieces,

- 1) a first letter by Candidus to Marius Victorinus (*Cand. I*)⁴⁶,
- 2) a first reply by Marius Victorinus to Candidus (*ad Cand.*)⁴⁷,
- 3) a second letter by Candidus to Marius Victorinus (*Cand. II*)⁴⁸,
- 4) a second reply by Marius Victorinus to Candidus (*adv. Ar. IA*)⁴⁹, which is at the same time a first part of Book I of
- 5) *Adversus Arium IB-IV*, the fifth and longest piece in the collection (*adv. Ar.*)⁵⁰,
- 6) Marius Victorinus' work *De homoousio recipiendo* (*De hom. rec.*)⁵¹,
- 7) three hymns *De Trinitate* (*hymn.*)⁵².

Two of these pieces, *Cand. I* and *Cand. II*, are purportedly not by Marius Victorinus at all but by a theological opponent named Candidus⁵³. Moreover,

46. *Cand. I* (1-14). The numbers in brackets refer to the critical edition by HENRY – HADOT (see above n. 7).

47. *Ad Cand.* (15-48).

48. *Cand. II* (49-53).

49. *Adv. Ar. IA* 1-47 (54-141). This second reply to Candidus became part of *adv. Ar.* due to a mistake in the way the collection was subdivided; this happened sometime in the tenth century; see HADOT, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), pp. 253-262 on this specific mistake and on the order of the collection in general.

50. *Adv. Ar. IB-IV* (142-277).

51. *De hom. rec.* (278-284).

52. *Hymn. I-III* (285-305).

53. We cannot here deal with the thorny question of the historicity of this otherwise unknown Candidus and his two letters addressed to Marius Victorinus. It was called in doubt long ago by M. SIMONETTI, *Nota sull'Ariano Candido*, in *Orpheus* 10 (1963) 151-157 and P. NAUTIN, *Candidus l'Arien*, in *L'homme devant Dieu: Mélanges Henri de Lubac*, Paris, Aubier, 1964, vol. 1, 309-320, whose arguments were accepted by HADOT, *Marius Victorinus*

Cand. II consists for the greater part of two further documents by Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia⁵⁴, which are introduced and cited by “Candidus” as authoritative sources and then commented on at great length by Marius Victorinus in *adv. Ar. IA*⁵⁵. In *Cand. I*, in contrast, “Candidus” first argues his position in purely rational (analytical) terms⁵⁶. Only after proclaiming as outcome of his analysis that God does not “generate” (*a deo igitur nulla generatio*), does he also explain the implications of this outcome by commenting on John 1,1-3⁵⁷. Marius Victorinus’ responses, by comparison, are full

(n. 1), p. 34 n. 43. See also K. SMOLAK, “O beata trinitas” – Überlegungen zu den trinitarischen Hymnen des Marius Victorinus, in *Wiener Studien. Beihefte* 33 (2009) 75-94, pp. 77-78, who understands *Candidus* here as the topical *candidus lector* as in Ovid, *Trist.* 1.11.35; 4.10.132; and Martial 7.99.5. In contrast, DRECOLL, *Marius Victorinus* (n. 1), cols. 130-132 (and in a forthcoming book chapter) argues that *Candidus* may indeed be a historical figure, a rare representative of a Latin form of “Anhomoianism” (*Anhomoertum*), and *Cand. I* and *II* his genuine works (and not construed by Marius Victorinus). Drecoll notes differences in the way Marius Victorinus and *Candidus* cite certain Bible verses, which in his view indicates that Marius Victorinus was not the author of *Cand. I* and *II*. Moreover, Marius Victorinus does not refute every single one of *Candidus*’ arguments in *Cand. I*. Had he construed *Cand. I* and *II*, he would have done so in such a way that in the end he would have had refuted every single argument in them. – In response to Drecoll’s first point one could argue that only *Cand. I* 10-11 (12-14) contains any citations of Scripture at all, and these are embedded in stock “Arian” arguments, which Marius Victorinus could have taken from any sources. They do not necessarily point to an independent Anhomoian author by the name of *Candidus*. Regarding Drecoll’s second point: In the opening sentence of *adv. Ar. IA* 1 (54.8-9) Marius Victorinus does indeed claim to have refuted *Candidus*’ arguments in their entirety (...*ut dum haec omni refutatione convincimus, illa quoque ex istorum refutatione vincamus*). One could argue that since all of *Candidus*’ arguments were construed by Marius Victorinus anyway, Marius Victorinus had absolutely no need to refute each of these arguments in detail. The comprehensive and yet detailed approach displayed in *adv. Ar.* was sufficient for driving home Marius Victorinus’ position while commenting on numerous individual aspects in passing.

54. Cf. *Cand. II* 1-2 (49-53). After a bland opening statement “*Candidus*” merely cites the two “letters”. Both documents are authentic and date from very early on in the Arian controversy (early 320s). The first is a letter by Arius addressed to Eusebius of Nicomedia, the second is a letter by Eusebius of Nicomedia to Paulinus of Tyre. It appears that Arius’ letter post-dates Eusebius’. Eusebius asks Paulinus to make his position clear. Arius reports to Eusebius that Paulinus was condemned for doing precisely that. Thus, the second letter reflects a “second phase” of the controversy in which the controversy is about to “spill over” beyond Alexandria, the first letter reflects a “third phase” in which that has already happened and a first wave of “condemnations” of bishops outside Alexandria has already taken place. For details concerning chronology and historical context of these letters see H.-C. BRENNÉCKE *et al.* (eds.), *Athanasius. Werke 3.1.4: Dokumente zur Geschichte des arianischen Streites*, Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2007, pp. XXIX-XXXIII.

55. Cf. *adv. Ar. IA* 1-47 (54-141), especially 1-3 (54-59).

56. There are no scriptural or (for that matter) any other references in *Cand. I* 1-9 (1-11).

57. In *Cand. I* 10 (12) “*Candidus*” first cites an uncommon variant of John 1,1 (...*per quem effecta sunt omnia*...), in a kind of *petitio principii*: Christ originates not *generatione* but *operatione a deo*, thus being *primum opus et principale dei*. “*Candidus*” then explains *effecta*, which in his view applies also to Christ: Him, too, God “brought forth” from nothing: *Effecta autem ex his quae non sunt*... He then cites John 1,1 in the more commonly known variant:

of references, to *Cand. I*, *Cand. II*, Arius' and Eusebius' letters cited therein, biblical passages, ecclesiastical writings relevant to the debate and philosophical sources that inform his argument. Commentarial elements feature throughout his elaborations⁵⁸.

Before looking at some of these features in more detail let us first address a question that arises in light of the above observations: Could there be a link between the presence of these features in the "theological treatises" and the way they are compiled as a dossier or collection? Or, put differently: Was there a literary form (a "genre") in classical Latin that could have served as a model for the "theological treatises" as a collection?

To address this question let us explore the pre-history of the commentary specifically in the Latin tradition. While generally the origins of the commentary both in the Greek and in the Latin tradition are sought in the tradition of philological scholarship⁵⁹, there is a strand in the Latin tradition that has its roots in the practice of forensic rhetoric. A crucial source in this regard is Cicero, *inv.* 2.39.115–48.143, where ways are discussed in which written documents (*scripta*, usually laws, or legal documents such as wills or contracts) are to be treated in forensic speeches, particularly ambiguities, discrepancies between "letter" and "meaning" of texts (*intentio auctoris*) and contradictions between documents or between different passages within documents⁶⁰.

per quem facta sunt omnia; explaining that one can indeed say of Jesus: *ex his quae non sunt, ea quae sunt effecit*; and one can therefore call Jesus *effector ... eorum quae sunt*, as long as one keeps in mind that since God created Jesus, Jesus creates differently from God: *quod deus fecit Iesum perfectum omnimodis, Iesus autem alia non eodem modo etsi perfecta fecit*. Although the argument contradicts Marius Victorinus' position, the commentarial techniques employed in this passage are the same as those employed by Marius Victorinus in the rest of his work.

58. At this point just some examples may suffice. *Adv. Ar. IA* 1 (54.1) begins with a cross reference (*in primo sermone huius operis*), followed by definitions (54.9-10: *et primum definiendae sunt...*). *Adv. Ar. IA* 2 (56.7-19) follows with a long citation from Eph 3,14-21 followed by a commentary which is informed by citations from John 1,18, 8,19, 14,26 and Rom 1,20. *Adv. Ar. IA* 4 (59.31) features a direct address: *Audi igitur...* This is one of many, a phenomenon that has been extensively discussed, e.g. by L. ABRAMOWSKI, "Audi, ut dico": *Literarische Beobachtungen und chronologische Erwägungen zu Marius Victorinus und den "platonisierenden" Nag Hammadi-Traktaten*, in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 117 (2006) 145-168. In *adv. Ar. IA* 21 (90.41-45: *Etenim aequale et magnitudinis et quantitatis est declarativum ... solum autem quantum, substantiae magnitudine quantum est*) specialist knowledge (from Aristotle, *Cat.* 6a 26) is displayed, again, the first of many such instances; see e.g. P. HADOT, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 32-33), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1968, vol. 2, p. 57; ERISMANN, *Identité* (n. 12).

59. See for this broadly LÖSSL, *Commentaries* (n. 5), pp. 171-177. Marius Victorinus' Pauline commentaries can be considered part of that tradition with greater certainty than, say, his "theological treatises".

60. The relevant passages are also discussed by Marius Victorinus, *comm. in Cic. rhet.* 2.39.115–48.143 (233-245 I.; 191-201 R.). Ambiguities in written sources and the discrepancy between letter and intended meaning are also discussed in Cicero, *part.* 31.107-108 and

As another source for the practice of commenting on written documents in speeches Cicero, *phil.* 13.22-48 has been suggested⁶¹. In this speech Cicero extensively cites and critically discusses a letter by Marc Antony to Octavian and Hirtius. In a recent study on Augustine's *Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum* Marion Schneider and Veronika Zilker have drawn a link between this rhetorical practice and the more commentarial genre of the "book dialogue" (*Buchdialog*)⁶². Even before Schneider and Zilker Peter Leberecht Schmidt cited examples of such book dialogues in which allegedly heretical documents were compiled into dossiers with documents in which the former were extensively and critically (polemically) commented upon⁶³. Such collections often documented real or imagined disputations and were intended to suggest to audiences that they could make up their own mind regarding the disputed questions. In reality, of course, the structure of the compilation was meant to leave no doubt about which of the two positions was the "true" one and should be followed. Material included in such dossiers could be real or "forged". The dossiers could document a disputation that had actually taken place or be intended as a replacement in cases when it had not been possible to carry out such a disputation. In the latter case they could be construed entirely by one author to present both sides of an argument and discuss them *in utramque partem*⁶⁴.

top. 25.96, where it is said of a law that it can be *ambiguum*, that there can be in it *discrepantia scripti et uoluntatis*, and that there can be *scripta contraria* referring to the same point. The influence of this tradition on Latin exegesis has been discussed especially in the case of Tertullian, e.g. by R.D. SIDER, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 85; see also C. TORNAU, *Rhetorik*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 29 (2018) 1-94, col. 66-67.

61. Cf. C.W. WOOTEN, *Cicero's Philippics and the Demosthenic Model: The Rhetoric of Crisis*, Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 1983, p. 162.

62. See M. SCHNEIDER – V. ZILKER, *Talking to Books: Some Basic Principles of the Literary Genre of Book Dialogues*, in *Würzburger Jahrbuch für Altertumswissenschaften* 39 (2015) 5-38, especially 18-28 (for the link between rhetorical and commentarial literature in the context of book dialogues). Examples listed by Schneider and Zilker include (besides the *Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum*) Augustine's works *Contra Faustum*, *Contra Gaudentium* and *Contra litteras Petilianas*.

63. See P.L. SCHMIDT, *Zur Typologie und Literarisierung des frühchristlichen lateinischen Dialogs*, in M. FUHRMANN (ed.), *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en occident* (Entrétiens sur l'antiquité Classique de la Fondation Hardt), Vandoeuvres, Fondation Hardt, 1977, 101-180, p. 142.

64. For further reflections of this nature and discussion of further literature dealing with book dialogues see V. ZILKER, *Julian von Aeclanum – Ad Florum, Liber I: Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Diss. PhD Würzburg, 2019, pp. 184-188. As already mentioned (above n. 53), the question whether Marius Victorinus' "Candidus" was a real or a fictional correspondent and/or whether his letters were genuine or written by Marius Victorinus, cannot be discussed here. The documents cited in *Cand. II* by Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia at any rate are translations of authentic documents (see above n. 54). Elsewhere I have argued that

The crucial outcome to take away from these reflections is the fact that such book dialogues generated a commentarial format in which discussions of both formal, text-related, and material, content-related, discussions could take place. Also, importantly, these discussions were not purely scholarly, *sine ira et studio*, but rhetorical, engaged, polemical⁶⁵. But for that they were no less commentarial. Marius Victorinus' *opus*⁶⁶, i.e. his compilation, the "theological treatises", is such a commentarial work. It discusses or comments upon lemmata drawn from *Cand. I* and *II*, the Arian letters cited in *Cand. II*, the Bible, especially the Gospel of John, and from Aristotelian, Platonist and Gnostic works. Thematically, the core analytical concept of the entire work could be said to be the term *δημοσίσιον*, which is explored regarding its meaning in and by itself and in the context of Aristotelian and Platonic logic and philosophy, and regarding its applicability to the Christian doctrine of God in the context of biblical and ecclesiastical tradition.

If we look at the work from this perspective, we find commentarial techniques in all its parts, employed for different purposes: The parts ascribed to Candidus are meant to represent the weaker side of the argument, Marius Victorinus' responses represent the stronger side, both in terms of the quality of the argument and of the quantity of proof material supplied to support it. However, the types of commentarial techniques used to sustain the arguments are very similar on both sides. We shall now briefly look at some of these. Due to lack of space some very few examples must suffice.

Cand. I begins with definitions⁶⁷, analyses and syllogisms⁶⁸ that again and again lead to the conclusion: God is not generated (begotten) and does not generate (beget)⁶⁹. This initial section (1-9) is followed by a (comparatively brief) section (10-11) in which that conclusion is supported with biblical

Marius Victorinus should be considered their compiler as well as the author of *Cand. I* and *II* and the inventor of his fictional correspondent Candidus. See J. LÖSSL, *Epistolarity, Commentary, and Confession of Faith: Reading Marius Victorinus' Fictional Exchange with Candidus in the Context of His Conversion*, in S.A. COOPER – V. NEMEC (eds.), *Marius Victorinus: Pagan Rhetor, Platonist Philosopher, and Christian Theologian* (forthcoming).

65. For this characteristic, too, Zilker cites a classical model, Plutarch, *Aud. poet.* 25a, where Plutarch encourages commentators of poetic, e.g. Homeric texts (cf. Plutarch, *Aud. poet.* 20e-f) to be critical and expose contradictions in the texts. See for this also above the Ciceronian sources cited under n. 60.

66. Thus Marius Victorinus' own reference to his work in *adv. Ar. IA* 1 (55.4).

67. Cf. e.g. *Cand. I* 1 (1.4-5): *Omnis generatio ... mutatio quaedam est*; 9 (11.2): *Deus enim spiritus est*.

68. Cf. *Cand. I* 1 (1.5-10): *Inmutabile autem est omne divinum, scilicet deus ... si igitur deus ... inmutabile..., neque genitum est neque generat aliquid...*

69. *Cand. I* 1 (1.10): *Ingenitus est deus*; (2.32): *Ingenitus igitur deus*; 3 (4.25): *Deus ergo ingenitus*; (5.37): *Non igitur generat*; 5 (6.14): *...nulla generatio a deo*; 6 (7.12): *Non igitur generatio a deo*; 7 (8.14): *Nulla igitur generatio a deo*; 9 (11.18): *A deo igitur nulla generatio*.

references⁷⁰. Here we find citations, explanations of words, phrases and sentences, paraphrases and more definitions and analyses⁷¹. The section concludes with a doxology⁷². These two paragraphs with their altogether eight biblical references make up the entirety of “Candidus” commentarial engagement with the Bible. That “Candidus” does not duly consider and revere the Bible – as a Christian should – is one of Marius Victorinus’ main charges against him⁷³. Marius Victorinus’ own position, by comparison, is

70. See for this above n. 57. In *Cand. I* 10 (12.2-4) the citation of a variant of John 1,1 is combined with a reiteration of the chief conclusion from *Cand. I* 1-9 (see above n. 69): *Quoniam dei filius, qui est ‘λόγος apud deum’, Iesus Christus, ‘per quem effecta sunt omnia et sine quo nihil factum est’, neque generatione a deo, sed operatione a deo, est primum opus et principale dei.* This new conclusion that Jesus Christ, the Logos and Son of God is not God but a creature is underpinned by further references: First (12.5-6), Phil 2,9 (*sed dedit ei nomen supra omnia nomina*) is cited and the explanation given that the “name” (singular!) referred to here is *filius* and *unigenitus* and that the fact that God gives the name proves that the Son is God’s creature, a result of God’s operating, i.e. his creating from nothing. With a reiteration (12.9) of John 1,3 (*per quem facta sunt omnia*) the concession is made that Jesus, too, creates out of nothing (on the variant reading of John 1,3 see above n. 57), but differently (*non eodem modo*). His simultaneous identity with and difference to God is explained by two further verses: The first (12.14-15) John 14,10 and 10,30 (*‘in patre est ipse et in ipso est pater’ et ambo ‘unum sunt’*) underlines the oneness of God and Jesus as creator out of nothing, the second (12.19-20) Matt 26,39 (*‘sed non ut ego volo, sed ut tu’*), the difference. In *Cand. I* 11 (13.2-7) three further citations follow that are in support of the argument that “God created (fecerit) Jesus Christ”: Acts 2,36: *...fecit nobis deus dominum Iesum Christum...*; Prov 8,22: *fecisti me praepositum ad omnes vias*; John 1,3-4: *et quod effectum in eo est, vita fuit*.

71. As can be seen from the list provided above under n. 70, the fundamental distinction made in *Cand. I* 10-11 is that Jesus Christ, the Logos and Son of God, is God’s creature but at the same time also creator (of all other things except himself): 10 (12.11-12): *Iesus autem alia non eodem modo etsi perfecta fecit*. This is, so to speak, the hermeneutic principle according to which the Bible references in *Cand. I* 10-11 are deployed. The ontological thinking behind this principle becomes visible towards the end of *Cand. I* 11 (13.12), where Jesus is defined as *prima substantia*, i.e. ontological principle of all creation, created “as substance, not from [sc. God’s] substance” (*substantia factum, non de substantia*).

72. *Cand. I* 11 (13-14). In the concluding part of *Cand. I* “Candidus” is at pains to emphasize that it is not his intention to suggest something “unpleasing” (*insuavis*) about Jesus. Starting from his definition of Jesus as *prima substantia* (see above n. 71) he goes on to address him as, among others, *initium et finis ... plenitudo, ‘per quem effecta sunt omnia et sine quo nihil’* (John 1,3), *salvator noster ... dominus autem in peccatorum et inpiorum punitionem, gloria vero et corona iustorum atque sanctorum*. The manner in which this concluding prayer emerges from the philosophical reflection on Jesus as *prima substantia* is reminiscent of the practice of concluding prayers in ancient philosophical commentaries; see for this e.g. the observations by I. HADOT, *Simplicius: Commentaire sur l’Manuel d’Epictète. Introduction et édition critique du texte grec* (Philosophia Antiqua, 66), Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln, Brill, 1996, pp. 13-16.

73. In *ad Cand. I* (15-16) Marius Victorinus cites Rom 11,33 (*dicit ... beatus Paulus, ... investigabilia sunt iudicia dei...*) and Isa 40,13 (= Rom 11,34: *dicit ... Esaias, quis enim cognovit domini mentem...*) and deduces that Scripture is necessary as a starting point for speaking about God, a principle that “Candidus” evidently neglected. Victorinus challenges “Candidus” whether he thinks Scripture were useless. Being a Christian he had to accept and

heavily built on the use of biblical proof texts and their explanation⁷⁴, although for the latter he makes use of propaedeutic philosophical works as well⁷⁵. But his point may be that "Candidus" began his commentary with the analysis of concepts before referring to biblical texts, whereas he (Marius Victorinus) interprets his biblical texts with the help of philosophical texts. His grasp of philosophy seems to be sounder, too⁷⁶. "Candidus" and Marius Victorinus also address one another, although Marius Victorinus addresses other interlocutors as well, thus claiming authorship of the "treatises" solely for himself and acting as an authoritative commentator, not merely as an interlocutor in a dialogue⁷⁷. And Marius Victorinus, too, concludes *ad Cand.* as well as the other parts of his *opus* with doxological and confessional prayers⁷⁸.

to revere Scripture: *An istas scripturas vanas esse opinaris? Sed nomine Christianus necesse habes accipere atque venerari scripturas inclamantes dominum Iesum Christum.*

74. Though the point here is not quantity (only five references are cited initially in support of Christ's divinity: Ps 2,7; Rom 8,32; Eph 1,3; John 10,30 and 14,9-10; later-on the main references commented on are John 1,1-3 and 18) but the principal approach: Scriptural references form the basis for a philosophical exegesis. As shown above (n. 73), Marius Victorinus derives this principle itself from Scripture, although admittedly he too is influenced by a non-biblical tradition when he speaks of the νοῦς πατριικός entering the soul and *spiritus desuper missus* moving the figurations that are inscribed in our souls from eternity (*figurationes intelligentiarum inscriptas ex aeterno in nostra anima movet*). The term νοῦς πατριικός can also be found in *Corpus Hermeticum, Excerptum Stobaei* I 1.1 (ed. FESTUGIÈRE, vol. 3, p. 2); for the belief in the pre-existence of souls see above n. 45 on *comm. Eph.* 1.4.

75. E.g. famously, in *ad Cand.* 2-14 (18.21–32.25) Marius Victorinus adapts a "Porphyrian source" – thus HADOT, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (n. 58), pp. 13-20 – which helps him to analyse the relationship of "being" (ὄν) and "non-being" (μη ὄν) and to reject "Candidus'" idea that God, because he is not generated, is "non-being" and not generating. For Marius Victorinus God is, if anything, "being before any other being" (πρό-ον; 2.28; 3.7; 14.23). Being is in God (*intus*, 14.22-23). It manifests itself through generation (16.23-25). In other words, Marius Victorinus agrees with "Candidus" that the Son is *substantia* (οὐσία), He through whom the Father manifests himself as creator (therefore: "through whom all things are made"). But he disagrees with him in that he argues (as stated in the Nicene Creed) that the Son is of the "same being" (ὁμοούσιον) as the Father. After making this clear he continues with a commentary on John 1,1-18 (*ad Cand.* 16-30).

76. See for this e.g. the analysis by ERISMANN, *Identité* (n. 12) and above nn. 12 and 58.

77. Cf. *Cand. I* 1 (1.4): *o mi dulcis senectus Victorine*; 10 (12.2): *o mi dulcis Victorine*; *ad Cand.* 1 (15.4): *o generose Candide*; (16.16-17): *Vides ... opinaris? ... habes...*; 2 (17.1): *Audi aliud de nobis*; 3 (19.36): *o mi dulcissime Candide*; 7 (22.14): *Audi*; 30 (45.1): *Habes nunc ... o mi Candide*; *Cand. II* 1 (49.4): *o amice Victorine*; *adv. Ar. IA* 1 (54.5): *o amice Candide*; 4 (59.31): *Audi igitur et aliud*; 15 (76.24): *Audi, Arrie, audi, Eusebie, et omnes audite, Arriani*; 16 (77.1): *et tu, Valentine*; 27 (101.1): *Vide*; 31 (109.1): *Sed videris*; *adv. Ar. IB* 60 (160.1): *audi, ut dico*; *adv. Ar. II* 2 (170.1): *Age nunc*; *adv. Ar. IV* (228.1): *Audi lector*.

78. *Ad Cand.* 32 (47-48): *Salva nunc nos, pater...*; *adv. Ar. IA* 47 (139-141): *Confitemur igitur...*; *adv. Ar. IB* 64 (167.28-30); *adv. Ar. II* 12 (190.22-37): *Credimus in deum patrem...*; *adv. Ar. IV* 33 (277.42-45). *Adv. Ar. III* has no concluding prayer, *adv. Ar. IB* and *IV* only very short *formulae*. The prayers in *adv. Ar. IA* and *II* are actually "creeds" or "confessions of faith". See on these LÖSSL, *Epistolary* (n. 64).

Though this may not be surprising in a Christian author, it is here drawn attention to specifically as a commentarial feature⁷⁹. As the discussion progresses, cross references and summaries become more frequent and increasingly draw attention to the fact that towards the end of the “treatises” more and more topics are revisited, reiterated or recapitulated⁸⁰.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in true commentarial fashion the “theological treatises” end without a summary or a conclusion. There is no great synthesis. Rather, their purpose is met by the fact that in them the appropriateness of the *ὁμοούσιον*-concept and its implications for the teaching of God is being tested (through literary-critical discussion and commentary and recourse to philosophical reference texts) on as many relevant biblical passages as possible (and appropriate), and defended against – in the author’s view – inappropriate alternatives, in particular the concepts *ὁμόλον*, *ὁμοιούσιον* and *ἀνομόλον* and their underlying ontology. Marius Victorinus’ “treatises” are commentarial in this respect too: They are intended to examine in detail the logical coherence and biblical compatibility of a simple confession of faith (the *ὁμοούσιον* and the spelling out of its implications) and to defend it against assumed “false” alternatives. They are not designed to draw together a grand synthesis. Attempts at summarising them into, for example, a philosophy of mind or “the soul”, a “metaphysics of the will”, or a systematic trinitarian theology influenced by gnostic and hermetic traditions are interesting but tend to reflect present-day philosophical concerns and to abstract from the historical context in which they originated. To do more justice to them it may also be useful, as has been attempted in the present paper, to study them alongside the Ciceronian and Pauline commentaries and to consider their literary genre and the commentarial techniques used in them. Marius Victorinus’ work is defined by his teaching of rhetoric as a professional (forensic) technique and

79. Cf. also above n. 72.

80. They abound in *adv. Ar. IA* 1 (54-56); see also *ibid.* 18 (80.1): *Sed ista plenius postea*; 19 (83.1): *...dictum est*; *adv. Ar. IB* 62 (162.1): *Inspiciendum prius... deinde...*; *adv. Ar. II* 3 (173.1): *Hic oriuntur quaestiones: prima...; alia...; tertia...*; *adv. Ar. III* 1 (192.26): *Ac de hoc et in aliis diximus*; *adv. Ar. IV* 2 (226.1-2): *Hoc quo facilius iudicetur, sic ista melius retractabimus*; 15 (246.3, 33): *diximus ... docuimus*; 18 (253.48): *apertum fecimus*; 19 (253.2; 254.17): *in aliis libris ... diximus*; 20 (255.2, 9, 11): *diximus ... dixi ... docuimus*; 21 (258.29): *supra docui*; 22 (259.20): *diximus*; 23 (259.2, 7): *dictum ... docui...*; 24 (262.34): *docuimus*; 28 (267.11): *et haec saepe iam docui*; 31 (271.1): *uti docuimus*; 32 (274.16-17, 23): *quem supra demonstravimus ... demonstravimus*.

as a "life art" (with a philosophical bent), and his practice of writing commentaries. It should make sense to take this also into account, at least to some degree, when investigating his "theological treatises".

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AMBROSIASTER AS PAUL-COMMENTATOR

EXEGETICAL METHODS AND AIMS IN HIS TREATMENT OF COLOSSIANS

In his *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* (*Inst.* 1.8.2), Cassiodorus relates how he “found an anonymous annotated codex given to us by divine foresight that offers valuable glosses [*non ignobili annotatione*] to the thirteen epistles of St Paul”¹. He goes on to say that he had heard that “blessed Ambrose left an annotated version of all the epistles of St Paul filled with his own satisfying commentary”, but despite his ongoing effort he was unable to locate a copy (*Inst.* 1.8.10)². Modern scholars suggest what Cassiodorus did not suspect: that the anonymous codex³ and the commentary attributed to Ambrose were one and the same, the work of the anonymous author known as Ambrosiaster since the late sixteenth century⁴. His writings reveal he was active in Rome during the pontificate of Damasus (366-384) and likely a presbyter⁵. While Ambrosiaster was not the first

1. *Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones*, ed. R.A.B. MYNORS, Oxford, Clarendon, 1937, p. 29.5-8: *quendam anonymum codicem subnotatum divina repperi provisione collatum, qui tredecim epistulas sancti Pauli non ignobili annotatione tractavit*. English transl. J.W. HALPORN, *Cassiodorus, Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and On the Soul* (Translated Texts for Historians, 42), Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2004, p. 128 n. 112.

2. Transl. HALPORN, *Cassiodorus* (n. 1), p. 129 (MYNORS, 30.20-24): *dicitur enim et beatum Ambrosium subnotatum codicem epistularum omnium sancti Pauli reliquisse suavissima expositione completum; quem tamen adhuc invenire non potui, sed diligenti cura perquiro*.

3. Thus A. SOUTER, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (Texts and Studies, 7), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1905, p. 4, also HALPORN, *Cassiodorus* (n. 1), p. 128 n. 112.

4. Scholarship for a long time operated under the assumption that Erasmus was responsible for the moniker “Ambrosiaster” (“would-be Ambrose”), a notion that has been definitively put to rest by J. KRANS, *Who Coined the Name ‘Ambrosiaster’?*, in ID. *et al.* (eds.), *Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. de Boer* (SupplNT, 149), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2013, 274-281. Krans notes that the earliest mention of that moniker is in the *Notationes in sacra biblia* of Lucas Brugensis, a series of text-critical notes on the Vulgate, published in 1580.

5. On Ambrosiaster’s clerical status, see D.G. HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster and Damasus: A Presbyter’s Perspective on Clerical Misconduct*, in *Sacris Erudiri* 58 (2019) 255-265. See also the monograph of S. LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, and the introduction to the recent English translation of Ambrosiaster’s work on Romans, by T.S. DE BRUYN – S.A. COOPER – D.G. HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster’s Commentary*

Latin to comment on Paul⁶, he was the first to compose a complete Latin series on the Pauline epistles (*sans* Hebrews)⁷ and accordingly has a notable place in what has been called the “rediscovery of Paul in fourth-century Latin theology”⁸. But for reasons known only to himself and probably to Damasus⁹, Ambrosiaster withheld his name from his two major exegetical works¹⁰, the *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*¹¹ and the commentary on the Pauline letters, both of which he cared enough about to issue in multiple recensions¹².

The author’s choice for anonymity, frustrating to modern scholars¹³, was a godsend for the works themselves, as they soon came to be transmitted under two of the most authoritative names in the Latin church¹⁴.

on the Pauline Epistles: Romans (Writings from the Greco-Roman World, 41), Atlanta, GA, SBL Press, 2017, pp. XXIII-XXIX.

6. Pace A. McGRATH, *Iustitia Dei: From the Beginnings to 1500*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020, who says that “[t]he earliest known Latin commentary upon the Pauline epistles” is Ambrosiaster’s work (pp. 38-39).

7. Hebrews did not achieve canonical status in the western church until the fifth century; see H.W. ATTRIDGE, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1989, p. 2.

8. B. LOHSE, *Beobachtungen zum Paulus-Kommentar des Marius Victorinus und zur Wiederentdeckung des Paulus in der lateinischen Theologie des vierten Jahrhunderts*, in A.M. RITTER (ed.), *Kerygma und Logos: Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979, 351-366. While it is not clear that the Pauline corpus had been forgotten in the fourth-century Latin church so as to require any rediscovery, there is no doubt that the theological controversies of the times created a need for comprehensive treatments of this important portion of Scripture.

9. For the connection between Ambrosiaster and Damasus, in addition to HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster and Damasus* (n. 5), see A. CAIN, *In Ambrosiaster’s Shadow: A Critical Re-evaluation of the Last Surviving Letter Exchange between Pope Damasus and Jerome*, in *REAug* 51 (2005) 257-277.

10. Concerning other (fragmentary) works attributed to Ambrosiaster, see C. MARTINI, *Ambrosiaster: De auctore, operibus, theologia*, Roma, Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1944, pp. 50-73.

11. A. SOUTER (ed.), *Pseudo-Augustini Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti CXXVII* (CSEL, 50), Wien, Tempsky; Leipzig, Freytag, 1908.

12. See the introduction to the critical edition by H.J. VOGELS (ed.), *Ambrosiastri qui dicitur commentarius in epistulas paulinas* (CSEL, 81/1-3), Wien, Hoelder – Pichler – Tempsky, 1966-1969, as well as LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (n. 5), pp. 11-16.

13. For discussion of the various attempts to identify Ambrosiaster, see LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (n. 5), pp. 26-32. See also M.-P. BUSSIÈRES (ed.), *Ambrosiaster: Contre les païens (Question sur l’Ancien et le Nouveau Testament 114) et Sur le destin (Question sur l’Ancien et le Nouveau Testament 115)* (SC, 512), Paris, Cerf, 2007, pp. 30-38.

14. On the early anonymous circulation of his works and the detection of their anonymous nature, see LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (n. 5), pp. 17-26. There is no full study of the reception history of Ambrosiaster’s commentary on Paul. A number of scholars have made notable efforts: see the discussion of the impact of Ambrosiaster on medieval exegetes in J.P. HEIL, *Kompilation oder Konstruktion? Die Juden in den Pauluskommentaren des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden, A6), Hannover, Hahn, 1998 (see

The *Quaestiones* was passed down among the works of Augustine¹⁵, and the commentary on the Pauline epistles for the most part under the name of Ambrose¹⁶. The fact that Cassiodorus had heard of a supposed commentary by Ambrose on all the Pauline epistles – there is no indication that the bishop of Milan ever wrote such a work¹⁷ – suggests Ambrosiaster's commentary was already circulating under that name. This attribution may go back as far as the early fifth century, since Augustine in 405 cited an interpretation of Gal 2,11-16 as that of Ambrose, but this interpretation is found not in any extant work of his but rather in Ambrosiaster's commentary on Galatians¹⁸.

The attribution of the commentaries to Ambrose became suspect with the rise of historical criticism¹⁹, although it was not until the late nineteenth century that the common authorship of the commentary on Paul and the *Quaestiones* was widely recognized²⁰. Richard Simon, in his ground-breaking *Histoire critique des principaux commentateurs du Nouveau Testament* (1693), rejected on stylistic grounds the possibility that St. Ambrose had penned the works on Paul's epistles, and he also regarded their manner of interpreting

index), and also M.C. SLOAN, *The Harmonious Organ of Sedulius Scottus: Introduction to His Collectaneum in Apostolum and Translation of Its Prologue and Commentaries on Galatians and Ephesians* (Millennium Studies, 39), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2012, pp. 87, 130-132. For an initial venture into the Reformation-era reception of the work on Paul, see S.A. COOPER, *Ambrose in Reformation Zürich: Heinrich Bullinger's Use of Ambrosiaster's Commentaries on Paul*, in *Studia Patristica* 35/11 (2017) 185-199.

15. The essays in this work belongs to the genre of exegetical question-and-response literature (*erotapokriseis*, in the Byzantine terminology); see A. VOLGERS – C. ZAMAGNI (eds.), *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 37), Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA, Peeters, 2004. See also M.-P. BUSSIÈRES, *Ambrosiaster's Method of Interpretation in the Questions on the Old and New Testament*, in J. LÖSSL – J.W. WATT (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, Farnham – Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2011, 49-61.

16. The commentary on Romans is cited as a work of Hilary by Augustine (*c. du. ep. Pelag.* 4.4.7; CSEL 60, 528). For discussion of the manuscript tradition of Ambrosiaster's commentaries and its attribution, see DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster's Commentary on Romans* (n. 5), pp. XXXI-LV.

17. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* in its early twentieth-century edition granted the point readily in its entry on Ambrose: "He is not the author of the admirable commentary on the thirteen Epistles of St. Paul known as 'Ambrosiaster'" (J.F. LOUGHLIN, art., *Ambrose*, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, Robert Appleton Co., 1907, vol. 1, p. 387).

18. J.H. BAXTER, *Ambrosiaster Cited as 'Ambrose' in 405*, in *JTS* 24 (1922-23) 187.

19. Contrary to frequent scholarly assertions, Erasmus did not reject the Ambrosian authorship of these works; on this error and its history, see KRANS, *Who Coined the Name 'Ambrosiaster'?* (n. 4).

20. J. LANGEN, *De commentariorum in epistulas Paulinas qui Ambrosii et quaestionum biblicarum quae Augustini nomine feruntur scriptore dissertatio*, Bonn, 1880; SOUTER, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (n. 3).

Scripture so different as to exclude his authorship²¹. Simon noted how the “Docteurs de Louvain” had already rejected the ascription of the *Quaestiones* to Augustine, and he argued for the common authorship of both works²².

Simon’s observation about Ambrosiaster’s exegetical methodology has been largely confirmed by more recent scholarship. Manlio Simonetti sees his “basic literalism” as the Latin Christian adoption of the tools of the grammarian²³ and argues that a significance presence of allegorical interpretation in the *Quaestiones* indicates that Ambrosiaster did not consider himself bound to any exclusive form of interpretation but applied different methods as demanded by the literary context²⁴. Thus the literalism of his interpretation of the *corpus Paulinum* follows from his understanding of the epistles as aspects of the apostle’s pastoral activity, which he as a clerical commentator sought to reapply to the contemporary situation of the church. Perhaps “historical-literal”²⁵ better describes Ambrosiaster’s method, for the Pauline epistles demand attention to the historical context of author and audience – and sometimes the differences between these two contexts²⁶ – as the basic horizon of interpretation. Such an historical-literal approach to Scripture is not what one generally associates with Ambrose’s exegesis²⁷

21. R. SIMON, *Histoire critique des principaux commentateurs du Nouveau Testament, depuis le commencement du Christianisme jusques à nôtre tems* [sic], Rotterdam, Leers, 1693, p. 133: “leur stile est si different l’un de l’autre, et leurs manières d’interpréter l’Écriture se ressemblent si peu, qu’il ne faut que jeter les yeux dessus, pour juger que S. Ambroise n’est point l’Auteur de ces Commentaires”.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-146.

23. M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera elo allegoria: Un contributo alla storia dell’esegesi patristica* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 23), Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1985, p. 240.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

25. M.G. MARA, *Ricerche storico-esegetiche sulla presenza del corpus paolino nella storia del cristianesimo dal II al V secolo*, in EAD., *Paolo di Tarso e il suo epistolario: Ricerche storico-esegetiche* (Testi storici, 16), L’Aquila, Japadre, 1983, 6-64, here, p. 36.

26. One can see his understanding of the change in the functions allotted to the various clerical offices, in his discussion of Eph 4,11-12 (CSEL 81/3, 98-100).

27. This is not to say that Ambrose declined to interpret Paul in this largely literal and historical manner, e.g., against Jerome’s Origenist approach, as shown by H. SAVON, *Note sur Ambroise, Origène et l’Épître aux Galatas*, in I. BOCHET – M. FÉDOU (eds.), *L’Exégèse patristique de l’Épître aux Galatas* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 197), Paris, Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 2014, 125-132. B. RAMSEY (*Ambrose* [Early Church Fathers], London, Routledge, p. 60), notes how when Ambrose offers a literal interpretation in his commentary on Luke, it is generally the first of three meanings, the natural, moral, and spiritual senses. On Ambrose’s exegetical methodology more generally, see H. GRAF REVENTLOW, *History of Biblical Interpretation. Vol. 2: From Late Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages* (SBL Resources for Biblical Study, 61), Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2009, pp. 49-68.

– Simon had a point – but the bishop of Milan himself recognized that the Pauline letters required precisely this methodology. In a letter to Simplician (*Ep.* 7.1), he expressed reluctance to take up his request to exposit the apostle, on the grounds that this would involve little more than doing the work of a grammarian²⁸. Such an approach was nonetheless the method Ambrosiaster adopted and adapted to his ecclesiastical ends, much as Marius Victorinus had done some two decades earlier in Rome. A former professor of rhetoric, Victorinus was the first Latin commentator on Paul; and Ambrosiaster seems to have known his work, at least the commentary on Galatians²⁹. Victorinus, however, brought much Neoplatonism into his reading of Paul, however much he also employed the grammarian’s tools to clarify and systematize the apostle’s teaching³⁰. Ambrosiaster kept it simpler, aiming – as Alexander Souter observed in his 1905 monograph – “to interpret the Apostle’s meaning plainly and naturally, and ... to enforce the lessons he sought to teach”³¹. That he also sought to keep his audience reading Paul in the light of developing fourth century standards of orthodoxy has been abundantly demonstrated.

Ambrosiaster also wrote with other aspects of his historical context in view, including the learned attacks of pagan critics of Christianity from the period of the Great Persecution initiated by Diocletian to the rule of the emperor Julian (361-363). Although the loss of the full texts of the works of Porphyry, Sossianus Hierocles, and Julian impair our ability to identify definitively the authors of the individual points of attack, the impact of such works upon Ambrosiaster was recognized by Franz Cumont in 1903³² and by Pierre

28. Ambrose, *Ep.* 7.1 (= Maur. *Ep.* 37), ed. O. FALLER (CSEL 82, 43-44): *Proxime cum veteris amoris usu familiaris inter nos sermo caderetur, delectari te insinuisti mihi, cum aliquid de Pauli apostoli scriptis coram populo ad disputandum adsumerem, quod eius profundum in consiliis vix conprehendatur, sublime in sentiis audientem erigat, disputantem accendat, tum quia in plerisque ita se ipse suis exponat sermonibus, ut is, qui tractat, nihil inveniat, quod adiciat suum, ac si velit aliquid dicere, grammatici magis quam disputatoris fungatur munere.* On Ambrose and Simplician, see C. PASINI, *Simpliciano e il vescovo Ambrogio*, in *Studia Ambrosiana* 1 (2007) 43-65.

29. Commentaries from Victorinus survive on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians; internal references suggest he wrote on Romans and the Corinthian correspondence as well. For Ambrosiaster’s use of Victorinus’ work on Galatians, see S.A. COOPER, *Marius Victorinus’s Commentary on Galatians* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, ch. 6.

30. See S.A. COOPER, *Philosophical Exegesis in Marius Victorinus’s Commentaries on Paul*, in LÖSSL – WATT (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (n. 15), 61-89.

31. SOUTER, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (n. 3), p. 7.

32. F. CUMONT, *La polémique de l’Ambrosiaster contre les païens*, in *Revue d’histoire et de littérature religieuses* 8 (1903) 417-440, pp. 427-430.

Courcelle in 1959³³. Courcelle pointed to numerous apologetic passages in the *Quaestiones* and the commentaries on Paul that presuppose a series of scripturally based, anti-Christian arguments. Noting similar echoes of pagan polemics in Augustine's works and in the *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*³⁴, Courcelle argued that the arguments commonly refuted by these authors and Ambrosiaster – including a number of passages on Colossians concerning miracles and the criticism of them from the standpoint of secular learning – derived from a Latin adaption of a collection of *zêtēmata* drawn from Porphyry's work *Against the Christians*³⁵. Moreover, many of Ambrosiaster's arguments concerning the relation of Christianity to Judaism, or to contradictions between the Old and New Testaments also appear to have been responses to pagan attacks along these lines³⁶.

Recent scholarship on Ambrosiaster has embedded him more deeply in the Roman ecclesiastical context. Sophie Lunn-Rockcliffe maintains that even if we cannot exactly locate Ambrosiaster as an individual in the ecclesiastical world of Rome, "it is possible to see him as a learned cleric preaching, teaching, and answering (in writing and in person) reams of questions from intellectual Christians in Rome, as well as the objections and criticisms of Jews and pagans"³⁷. Emanuele Di Santo in his lengthy monograph argues similarly that the *Quaestiones* and the commentary on Paul share a single agenda: "to present the authentic Christian doctrine by distinguishing it from paganism, Judaism, and from contemporary heterodox groups of Christians"³⁸. David Hunter has concluded in a résumé of the state of research, both his own and

33. P. COURCELLE, *Critiques exégétiques et arguments antichrétiens rapportés par Ambrosiaster*, in *VigChr* 13 (1959) 133-169.

34. On the latter, see M.A. CLAUSSEN, *Pagan Rebellion and Christian Apologetics in Fourth-Century Rome: The Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995) 589-614.

35. COURCELLE, *Critiques exégétiques et arguments antichrétiens* (n. 33), p. 168. For recent discussion of this work of Porphyry, see the introduction to the new critical edition, M. BECKER (ed.), *Porphyrios, "Contra Christianos": Neue Sammlung der Fragmente, Testimonien und Dubia mit Einleitung, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen* (Texte und Kommentare, 52), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2016. For the anti-Christian polemics of emperor Julian, see H.C. TEITLER, *The Last Pagan Emperor: Julian the Apostate and the War against Christianity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 195-262.

36. COURCELLE, *Critiques exégétiques et arguments antichrétiens* (n. 33), pp. 156-163. For pagan criticism of Christianity based on New Testament passages see J.G. COOK, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 2002.

37. LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (n. 5), p. 86; for his attitudes toward pagan rulers and religion, see pp. 44-50, 134-138, 162-174.

38. E. DI SANTO, *L'apologetica dell'Ambrosiaster: Cristiani, pagani e giudei nella Roma tardoantica* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 112), Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2008, p. 9.

that of others, that Ambrosiaster's works allow us to hear "a voice that is distinctively *clerical*, distinctively *moderate*, and distinctively *Roman* on many issues of concern in the church at the end of the fourth century"³⁹.

The commentaries themselves, moreover, give evidence of Ambrosiaster's Roman context in the text of the Pauline epistles he chose as the basis of this work. Souter had already recognized that his *Vetus Latina* (VL) text was of the Italic type⁴⁰; and subsequent scholarship has shown it to be a version typical of the time for Rome, perhaps freshly revised there as well⁴¹. A further development in scholarship has been the realization that Ambrosiaster's multiple revisions of his works reveal special areas of concern that permit some precision in dating. The revised versions of his commentaries reflect doctrinal and ecclesiastical developments leading up to the council of Constantinople of 381 and the follow-up synod of Rome in 382⁴². Because there are three recensions of Romans and two of all the other commentaries, it is not unreasonable to envision Ambrosiaster writing and re-writing them for a period of a decade or more. At any rate, he seems to have completed his revisions on his commentaries by the final year of Damasus' pontificate, in late 384⁴³. The commentary on Paul was likely begun after Ambrosiaster had already written at least some of the exegetical essays in his *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* concerning particularly problematic Pauline passages⁴⁴.

39. D.G. HUNTER, *The Significance of Ambrosiaster*, in *J ECS* 17 (2009) 1-26, p. 5.

40. A. SOUTER, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul: A Study*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1927, p. 41.

41. This version of the VL Pauline canon is referred to as I-type; see the discussion of H.J. FREDE (ed.), *Epistula ad Ephesios* (VL, 24/1), Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 1962-1964), pp. 33*-35* and U. FRÖHLICH (ed.), *Epistula ad Corinthios I* (VL, 22), Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 1995-1998), pp. 197-199. For discussion of Ambrosiaster's VL text as well as his doctrinal context, see A. POLLASTRI, *Ambrosiaster, commento alla Lettera ai Romani: Aspetti cristologici* (Testi storici, 7), L'Aquila, Japadre, 1977, pp. 8-38.

42. For his revisions as influenced by current events, see M.-P. BUSSIÈRES, *L'influence du synode tenu à Rome en 382 sur l'exégèse de l'Ambrosiaster*, in *Sacris Erudiri* 45 (2006) 107-124, and EAD., *L'esprit de Dieu et l'Esprit Saint dans les Questions sur l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament de l'Ambrosiaster*, in *REAug* 56 (2010) 25-44; T.S. DE BRUYN, *Ambrosiaster's Revisions of His Commentary on Romans and Roman Synodal Statements about the Holy Spirit*, in *REAug* 56 (2010) 45-68; S.A. COOPER – D.G. HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster redactor sui: The Commentaries on the Pauline Epistles (Excluding Romans)*, in *REAug* 56 (2010) 69-91.

43. On the question of the dating of Ambrosiaster's commentaries on Paul, see DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster's Commentary on Romans* (n. 5), pp. XXV-XXVII and LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (n. 5), pp. 12-13.

44. There are good grounds for thinking the commentaries on Paul were composed later than at least some of the essays in the *Quaestiones*. To wit, in Ambrosiaster's remarks on Rom 9,32 (§1a), he names the prophet Ezekiel and quotes Ezek 20,25; the same verse he misidentifies as from Jeremiah in *Qu. app.* 51 (CSEL 50, 429), and in *Qu. app.* 75.2 (CSEL 50, 469). Yet at *Qu. test.* 44.9 (CSEL 50, 76) he attributes the verse to Ezechiel. Moreover, his remarks on Titus 1,14 also allude to the same verse in Ezekiel and name that prophet as the author

In a recent examination of Ambrosiaster's commentary on Galatians, Martine Dulaey has shown "plusieurs des thèmes qu'il aborde sont des questions d'actualité sous le pontificat de Damase"⁴⁵. Dulaey notes how Ambrosiaster's sharp historical sense in reconstructing the context of Galatians went hand in hand with his intervention on a number of contemporary fronts against heretics, schismatics, and other ecclesiastical dissidents, as well as in his treatment of other issues concerning the Roman church⁴⁶. The interplay between the original context of Galatians and that of the anonymous commentator (and his target audience) is particularly appreciable in light of the fact that Galatians is relatively rich in internal information about the historical situation. That is of course not the case for all of the letters in the Pauline corpus, particularly for those judged to be pseudonymous, where the lines between text and context are difficult due to the necessarily hypothetical reconstruction of the latter. Colossians has posed particular problems for modern interpreters in this regard⁴⁷; and while Ambrosiaster was spared the pain of having to consider the possibility that this epistle was not authored by the apostle himself, he was by no means relieved of the difficulty of attempting to discern from the highly polemical section of his letter (2,8-23) the nature of the opponents and their teachings. In the present contribution I hope to shed additional light on Ambrosiaster as a commentator on the Pauline epistles through an examination of his work on Colossians, paying particular attention to his interpretation of the polemical aspects of the epistle.

We begin with an overview and general description of Ambrosiaster's commentaries on Paul, their form, and the exegetical methods he employs, before turning to consider the role of his prefaces, and finally to a selection of some details from his commentary on the letter to the Colossians. This last section will limit itself to Ambrosiaster's interpretation of the epistle's first two chapters, where he engages with the evidence that has made for persistent exegetical questions about the nature of the opponents and the teachings.

(CSEL 81/3, 326.18-21). For his essays treating Pauline passages in depth (sometime because they seem in overt tension with another biblical passage), see *Qu. test.* 66, 75, 78, 81, 82, 99.

45. M. DULAËY, *Expliquer Paul dans la Rome de Damase: Le commentaire de l'Ambrosiaster sur l'Épître aux Galates*, in BOCHET – FÉDOU (eds.), *L'Exégèse patristique de l'Épître aux Galates* (n. 27), 83-124, p. 85.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-123.

47. See the discussion of R.MCL. WILSON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (International Critical Commentary), London, T&T Clark, 2005, pp. 9-35.

I. AMBROSIASTER'S COMMENTARIES ON PAUL:
FORM AND EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY

The species of commentary Ambrosiaster chose to write on the Pauline letters is the continuous or running commentary. This kind of commentary renders the full text of the commented work in lemmatized form, but it was only one of the several species of commentaries developed in the ancient Mediterranean world for treating authoritative texts, secular and sacred⁴⁸. The specifically exegetical treatises in Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* provide an illuminating contrast with his commentaries, showing his familiarity with another literary form capable of exegetical application: investigative essays – ζήτηματα or *quaestiones* – that work to resolve problems implied in a difficult scriptural passage or to adjudicate cases of apparent conflict between passages from various biblical books. A continuous commentary, on the other hand, requires the renunciation of any such limited goal and can, as in Ambrosiaster's work, have an aim that is both humbler and more ambitious: to represent the apostle's teachings in his letters, and through them to address the issues of the commentator's own day. The means to perform this actualization was the line-by-line commentary, in which elements of the epistolary text could be brought to bear in the service of either the reconstruction of the apostle's mind and situation or the contemporary application of the teaching. In the case of Colossians, for example, Ambrosiaster picks up obvious pieces of internal evidence of the epistle's historical context – what most modern scholars consider the pseudonymously constructed context – and interprets their rhetorical function in the context of the whole letter and the situation of Paul and his addressees. Thus, for example, Ambrosiaster reads the closing greeting (Col 4,18) as a plea not to increase the woes of the imprisoned apostle⁴⁹.

48. The running commentary was first developed by Aristarchus of Samothrace, the head of the "library" of Alexandria in the mid-second century BCE who wrote commentaries on literary works, from which only fragments on Homer survive (see G. KENNEDY [ed.], *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Vol. 1: *Classical Criticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 208). This genre arose from oral instruction, where a portion of a literary or philosophical text would be read aloud and then commented on by the professor. For discussion of this form of commentary in the philosophical schools, see I. HADOT, *Der fortlaufende philosophische Kommentar*, in W. GEERLINGS – C. SCHULZE (eds.), *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter: Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung* (Clavis Commentariorum Antiquitatis et Medii Aevi, 2), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2002, pp. 183-199.

49. CSEL 81/3, 207.2-5: "In order to strengthen the letter, he says it has been signed in his own hand, reminding them to have his final fate in mind – the things he was suffering for the salvation of the gentiles – and that they should comport themselves as the kind of people on whose behalf he would not be pained to suffer injurious treatment".

Ambrosiaster's continuous commentary consists for the most part in an explanatory paraphrase that does not attempt an exhaustive analysis of the text. The variety of generic options for writing commentaries differed chiefly in regard to the degree of comprehensiveness. This is apparent from the helpful classificatory schema Jerome relates in the preface to his translation of Origen's *Homilies on Ezekiel*. There he mentions that the latter's exegetical writings could be classified as *excerpta* (σχόλια), homilies (*genus homileticum*), or *volumina* (τόμοι)⁵⁰. *Volumina* could include running commentaries of various degrees of comprehensiveness⁵¹; and among the Latin commentators whose works fall into this category, there is a spectrum of comprehensiveness, from the lengthy works of Jerome, to the briefer ones of Victorinus, and the still more compact ones of Ambrosiaster, and finally to the extremely succinct commentaries of Pelagius. Thus Ambrosiaster, in sketching the general sense of a passage, engages only a selection of textual details, except when demanded by a theologically complex pericope (e.g., as in his extended remarks on Phil 2,5-11) or by variants in the biblical texts (as on Rom 12,11, Rom 5,15, or Gal 2,5)⁵².

An illustrative example of Ambrosiaster's treatment of textual variants is found in his remarks on Gal 2,1-2. Here Paul sought to indicate the time and nature of his contact with the Jerusalem apostles and their confirmation of his gospel: "after fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas". The commentator brings the report in Acts 15 about the Apostles Decree into the discussion of these verses, and he accuses some unnamed *sofistae Graecorum* of inserting an additional phrase into the passages (Acts 15,20.29) that record the apostles' demand for abstention from idolatry, fornication, and blood⁵³. An additional fourth item in the list, "and from

50. *Origenes Werke*, vol. 8, ed. W.A. BAEHRENS (GCS, 33), Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1925, p. 318.13-19.

51. I owe this point to W. GEERLINGS, *Die Lateinisch-Patristischen Kommentare*, in ID. – SCHULZE, *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter* (n. 48), 1-14, here p. 3.

52. For Ambrosiaster's treatment of textual variants, see POLLASTRI, *Ambrosiaster, commento alla Lettera ai Romani* (n. 41), pp. 31-35.

53. CSEL 81/3, 19.4-11: "In short, these three commandments, which were commanded by the apostles and transmitted to elders, appear to be things outside the purview of Roman laws, namely, abstention from idolatry, from blood – as in the commandment to Noah (Gen 9,4) – and from fornication. Failing to understand these things, the sophists of the Greeks, although they at least recognize that one is to abstain from blood, have falsified scripture by adding a fourth command: to abstain from eating anything slaughtered by suffocation. I think they are now by the will of God on the verge of understanding that what they have added had just been stated". That is, the fourth item in the list – to abstain from what has been suffocated – was already comprehended in the command to abstain from (eating) blood. Ambrosiaster correctly takes the biblical prohibition against "blood" to be against eating blood, which is the point of the command not to slaughter animals by suffocation. This point

things strangled”, is accepted as original by most modern scholars⁵⁴, but Ambrosiaster argued against this variant based on a three-fold rationale he articulated previously on Rom 5,14: the agreement of *historia*, *ratio*, and *auctoritas* permit a sure judgment in the matter of textual variants⁵⁵. His characterization of those who promote readings present in Greek manuscripts as *sofistae*⁵⁶ is telling:

Let the sophists of the Greeks now speak up [*nunc dicant sofistae Graecorum*]. Let those who claim on their part the skill to make themselves to flourish naturally by the keenness of their innate disposition [*naturaliter subtilitate ingenii se vigere*] say what items have been transmitted to the gentiles to observe⁵⁷.

His innuendo is that such *sofistae* – “scholars” or perhaps “spokesmen” – are guilty of a quasi-pagan intellectual pride in their assumption about the correctness of their philological judgment in substituting Greek readings for what Ambrosiaster considered the older and accordingly more authoritative readings found in VL manuscripts of the Pauline epistles⁵⁸.

Elsewhere in the commentaries on Paul and in the *Quaestiones*, Ambrosiaster’s mention of *sofistae* refers to pagans (or Christians who have not abandoned pagan practices like astrology). His comments on 1 Cor 15,39 similarly call on the *sofistae mundi et scrutatores siderum* to speak up (with the same verbal form, *dicant*); and in *Qu. test.* 114.31 he refers thus to elite

had been established already in a Latin exegetical tradition (cf. Tertullian, *Pud.* 12.4 quoting Acts 15,29 [CCSL 2, 1302.11-15]; cf. Tertullian, *Mon.* 5.3 [CCSL 2, 1234.23]); the fact that this variant appeared in the Vulgate of Acts shows Ambrosiaster to have been too optimistic in his hopes that his preferred reading would be accepted.

54. Thus B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 21994, pp. 379-383.

55. CSEL 81/1, 177.23-24.

56. The term *sophista* at the time generally meant neither an orator nor a professor of rhetoric but a teacher specializing in the performance of a speech (i.e., a trainer in *pronuntiatio*). Thus Marius Victorinus in his commentary on Cicero’s textbook rhetoric, *De inventione* (*C. Marius Victorinus, Commenta in Ciceronis Rhetorica*, ed. T. RIESENWEBER [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2013, p. 3.18-20): *Dicendum etiam videtur, quae distantia sit inter rhetorem, sophistam et oratorem. Rhetor est, qui docet litteras atque artes tradit eloquentiae: sophista est, apud quem dicendi exercitium discitur: orator est, qui in causis privatis ac publicis plena et perfecta utitur eloquentia*. Similarly, DULAËY, *Expliquer Paul dans la Rome de Damase* (n. 45), pp. 110-111, who, noting the passage in Victorinus, translates *sofistae Graecorum* as “les répétiteurs des Grecs” and discerns Ambrosiaster’s point that because these *sofistae* are only assistants of the professors of rhetoric, they are not the true teachers. But because Ambrosiaster’s use of the term here is polemical, a pejorative sense would seem indicated, perhaps, “mouthpieces for the Greeks”.

57. CSEL 81/3, 18.18-20.

58. Ambrosiaster argues in his comments on Rom 5,14 (§4e-5a) that the VL translations preserve uncorrupted readings of older Greek manuscripts (CSEL 81/1, 177.10-26).

pagans (*sophistae et nobiles mundi*) converting to Christ⁵⁹. But in the commentary on Galatians, the *sophistae Graecorum* are obviously not pagans but Latin Christians who advocated revising the wildly disparate Vetus Latina translations in light of readings in Greek manuscripts⁶⁰. Most prominent in this effort was of course Jerome, who had been commissioned by Damasus to revise the VL text of the gospels, which he completed in 384⁶¹. Ambrosiaster's hostility to the whole project was first noted by Vogels⁶², who argued that Jerome reciprocated with a barbed remark referring to such defenders of the Vetus Latina like Ambrosiaster as "our two-legged donkeys" (*Ep.* 27.3)⁶³.

Polemical asides such as this that digress from the task of textual exposition are relatively rare; more frequent are Ambrosiaster's brief digressions to supply historical context or doctrinal elaboration. A form he often resorts to in his explanatory paraphrase consists of questions – generally rhetorical questions – that urge the readers to adopt the ostensibly obvious meaning or application of the text, e.g., on Col 4,6⁶⁴. Through such questions, the commentator's voice conducts an inquiry before an imagined audience, who are implicated as Christians – those who accept the authority of the Christian canon – concerned about correct doctrine and practice⁶⁵.

Ambrosiaster's commentaries also contain a standard set of formal elements. Each one opens with a preface, labelled *argumentum* in the manuscript tradition. These prefaces offer a selective synopsis of facts for the interpretation of each epistle. This synopsis can include the history and present situation of the church or – as in the case of the Pastorals and Philemon – that of the persons addressed, as well as the apostle's aims in writing them. The entire text of each epistle is quoted, broken into segments followed by a corresponding section of comments. The lemmata vary in

59. CSEL 50, 318.1-2.

60. See discussion in SOUTER, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (n. 3), pp. 199-200.

61. See C.B. TKACZ, *Labor tam utilis: The Creation of the Vulgate*, in *VigChr* 50 (1996) 42-72.

62. H.J. VOGELS, *Ambrosiaster und Hieronymus*, in *RBen* 66 (1956) 14-19.

63. Ed. I. HILBERG (CSEL 54, 225.15): *revertimur ad nostros bipedes asellos et in eorum aurem bucina magis quam cithara concrepamus*.

64. CSEL 81/3, 203.27-29: *quid enim opus est loqui cum eo, quem scias intractabilem et obstinatae mentis, paratum ad contumeliam faciendam?* His remarks on Phil 2,9-11 (CSEL 81/3, 141-145) contains quite a few rhetorical questions of this sort.

65. See W. GEERLINGS, *Zur exegetischen Methode des Ambrosiaster*, in G. SCHÖLLGEN – C. SCHOLTEN (eds.), *Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Ernst Dassman*, Münster, Aschendorff, 1996, pp. 444-449. For good observations about Ambrosiaster's methods, see also W. MUNDLE, *Die Exegese der Paulinischen Briefe* (diss.), Marburg, Schaaf, 1919, pp. 36-41.

length but are mostly between one and three modern verses long. The commentary often quotes words or phrases from the lemma and occasionally refers to other epistles (less frequently other biblical books) for clarification or expansion. Often omitting any discussion of the individual elements of the passage⁶⁶, the exposition proceeds largely through summarizing paraphrase, frequently introduced by formulaic verbs of saying (*dicit* or *dixit*; *exponit*; *manifestum est*; *verum est*; *ostendit*; *monet*; *admonet*). Phrases like *hoc est* and *id est* abound to explain individual words, phrases, or the fuller content expressed by the language of the text; like philosophical commentators, Ambrosiaster seems to have distinguished between λέξις and θεωρία⁶⁷, the explanation of individual words and the interpretation of the content as a whole. Very frequently he introduces a paraphrase with *significat* or *vult*, etc. The comments to a particular segment of text only rarely conclude with any reference to the next section of the lemma.

In a valuable study, Giacomo Raspanti has identified these formal elements and argued that they reveal a clear relationship between the exegetical and pastoral aspects of Ambrosiaster's commentaries⁶⁸. The chief evidence of this is the frequent alternation between crisp paraphrase and dramatic breaks from the objective and impersonal presentation to a first-person address and exhortation of the audience⁶⁹. The relation between the apostle and his audience is projected upon that between the commentator and readers, such that "the text of Paul assumes the value of a living and contemporary *auctoritas*, immediately present and tangible in all its clarity and plainness"⁷⁰. This alteration in perspective works in effect "to actualize and transform the exegesis into preaching, paraenesis, or polemics"⁷¹. In this way, Ambrosiaster engages in "living catechesis"⁷², which was a task that required he communicate clearly what the apostle had written as well as how his teachings were applicable as norms in the commentator's own church and day.

66. As an example, see his treatment of the extended "armor of God" metaphor in Eph 6,13-17. While Victorinus treated all the different elements of the armor (ed. F. GORI, CSEL 83/2, 86-90; for the English translation, see S.A. COOPER, *Metaphysics and Morals in Marius Victorinus' Commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians* [American University Studies, 5/155], Frankfurt a.M., Lang, 1995, pp. 108-111), Ambrosiaster discusses none of the different components but simply explains the general point of the metaphor.

67. HADOT, *Der fortlaufende philosophische Kommentar* (n. 48), p. 184.

68. G. RASPANTI, *Aspetti formali dell'esegesi paolina dell'Ambrosiaster*, in *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 16 (1999) 507-536.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 525-526.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 530.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 533.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 536.

Despite Ambrosiaster's evident concern for the social, historical, and religious contexts of his time, Souter's attempt to detect something of a historical sensibility on the part of the anonymous commentator has been shown to be problematic. While Souter was correct to note that Ambrosiaster had an unusually nuanced historical perspective in regards to the development of clerical offices⁷³, further study has shown that although Ambrosiaster often employs the term *historia*, his use of the term does not conform to the modern sense invoked by Souter, the critical reconstruction of the past. Marie-Pierre Bussi eres, in her study of Ambrosiaster's use of *historia* (and *auctoritas* and *ratio*) in treating textual variants, has concluded that unlike his contemporaries Jerome and the grammarian Servius, Ambrosiaster did not follow a consistent philological principle in his exegesis. Rather he appears to have regarded theological factors as paramount in deciding among textual variants⁷⁴. *Historia* in his usage means coherence with the sacred narrative of the Scriptures⁷⁵ – although, as Bussi eres points out, one passage in the *Quaestiones* uses *historia* (in the plural) to refer to the mythological accounts of Greek and Roman gods⁷⁶. Thus when Ambrosiaster appeals to *historia* in seeking an adequate interpretation of a biblical passage, he is looking for an exegesis that has internal consistency with the Scriptures as a whole and coheres with the doctrinal orthodoxy – the full story, as it were.

Ambrosiaster's exegetical techniques are the familiar modes of textual exposition borrowed by both Latin and Greek Christian commentators from the methods of grammarians, whose literary critical endeavors arose in relation to their teaching of the classics of Greek and Roman literature⁷⁷.

73. SOUTER, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (n. 3), p. 7: "he affirms the original identity of bishop and presbyter"; see also D.G. HUNTER, *Rivalry between Presbyters and Deacons in the Roman Church: Three Notes on Ambrosiaster, Jerome, and The Boasting of the Roman Deacons*, in *VigChr* 71 (2017) 1-16.

74. M.-P. BUSSI ERES, *Le commentaire au 4^e si ecle ou, pour reformuler le dicton, anciennet e a-t-elle toujours autorit e?*, in L. DITOMMASO – L. TURCESCU (eds.), *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Montr al Colloquium in Honour of Charles Kannengiesser, 11-13 October 2006* (Bible in Ancient Christianity, 6), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2008, 83-99.

75. M.-P. BUSSI ERES, *V erit e et mensonge chez l'Ambrosiaster: Les param etres de l'histoire divine et de l'histoire des hommes*, in P. FLEURY (ed.), *Actes du colloques Rh torique et historiographie* (Cahiers d' tudes Anciennes, 42), Ottawa, Universit  d'Ottawa, 2006, 75-88.

76. *Qu. test.* 114.9 (CSEL 50, 307.8-12): *Ianus enim et Saturnus, Iovis et Mercurius et Apollo et ceteri, item Minerva et Isis et Frux illa et Venus et Flora Meretrix cum ceteris dii deaque sunt, sicut historiae tam Graecorum quam Romanorum testantur*. This passage is one where Ambrosiaster is dependent upon Tertullian's apologetic works, so that this exceptional usage and meaning can be accounted for and need not be extended to his other employments of the term.

77. See KENNEDY, *Classical Criticism* (n. 48), ch. 6. Further, see C. SCH UBLIN, *Zur paganen Pr gung der christlichen Exegese*, in J. VAN OORT – U. WICKERT (eds.), *Christliche*

Some of these methods were geared toward the smaller units of communication, e.g., the identification of figures of speech and thought. Thus Ambrosiaster notes the presence of such figures as hyperbaton⁷⁸ and irony, which he recognized the apostle himself employed as means of persuasion⁷⁹. As regards his interpretation of the larger literary structures, the individual epistles as discrete units, Ambrosiaster for the most part employed the principle articulated by Alexandrian literary scholarship of interpreting authors primarily in light of their own utterances, although he also draws on the further resource of the full biblical canon when useful. The theory of treating authors primarily in term of their own text was famously formulated by Porphyry as interpreting “Homer from Homer” (*Qu. hom.* 12-14)⁸⁰. Ambrosiaster would likely have been familiar with this from Cicero’s mention of the principle, as it was applied to forensic argumentation, in the widely used school-text, *De inventione* (*inv.* 1.40.117)⁸¹. In line with this principle, Ambrosiaster, when commenting on a particular passage, often cites related texts from other Pauline letters, along with passages from Acts that illuminate the situation of the epistle or the teaching given in it. Of the other New Testaments books, he refers most frequently to Matthew and John; of the Hebrew Bible he most often cites Genesis, the Psalms, and Isaiah.

Ambrosiaster’s basic procedure of clarifying the message of Paul’s letters in line with the apostle’s pastoral and didactic intentions largely explains his lack of recourse to allegorical interpretation. But he does not seem to have

Exegese zwischen Nicaea und Chalcedon, Kampen, Kok Pharos, 1992, 148-173. In regard to the transference of this aspect of the grammarian’s practice to interpreting scripture, Schäublin has noted that “the transmission of heavenly truth has thus clearly an earthly history, and this makes it necessary to read the Bible critically, analytically, i.e., ‘grammatically’ like any other text. Reading ‘grammatically’ implies the reconstruction of the events which seems to have caused the troublesome situation” (p. 158).

78. See his remarks on Gal 5,4, *recensio a* (CSEL 81/3, 55.7-10): *hyperbaton ergo est, ut post ‘Christus nihil vobis prodest’ iungatur ‘evacuati estis a Christo’*. For a discussion of such figures in ancient rhetorical theory, see *Rhet. Her.* 4.1; cf. also Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.23-27.

79. E.g., his comments on 2 Cor 11,19 (§2), cf. also on 1 Cor 4,8 (§1). On *ironia* in ancient literary theory, see Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.4.44-53.

80. Thus C. SCHÄUBLIN, *Homerum ex Homero*, in *Museum Helveticum* 34 (1977) 221-227. On the origin of this principle, see J. MANSFELD, *Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled before the Study of an Author or a Text* (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 61), Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln, Brill, 1994, pp. 204-205. Porphyry’s *Homeric Questions* is now available in the edition and translation of J.A. MACPHAIL, Jr., *Porphyry’s Homeric Questions on the Iliad: Text, Translation, Commentary* (*Texte und Kommentare*, 36), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 2011.

81. LCL 386, p. 286: *Deinde qua in sententia scriptor fuerit ex ceteris eius scriptis et ex factis, dictis, animo atque vita eius sumi oportebit* (transl. H.M. HUBBELL, p. 287: “In the next place one ought to estimate what the writer meant from his other writings, acts, words, disposition and in fact his whole life”).

been opposed to allegorical interpretation, as his treatment of Gal 4,23-24 reveals. There when the apostle gives an interpretation of Hagar and Sarah (which some modern scholars prefer to designate as typological rather than allegorical)⁸², Ambrosiaster, like other ancient commentators, knows nothing of this distinction⁸³ and employs the language of “type” followed by a school definition of allegory: *in typum enim Christi natus est Isaac. Ideo haec per allegoriam adserit dicta, ut aliud ex alio significant personae Ismahel et Isaac*⁸⁴. He then provides a figurative interpretation of their two sons that fits the issue of the epistle and amplifies, in an anti-Jewish direction, Paul’s contrast between the son of Hagar *qua* slave and the son of the free woman Sarah⁸⁵. Similar non-literal exegeses, such as the apostle himself engaged in, recur in his commentaries on the epistles⁸⁶, although they feature more prominently in his *Quaestiones*⁸⁷. Ambrosiaster was apparently ready to deviate from the program of literal interpretation when necessary to give sense to biblical texts or when relevant for the pastoral admonition of his intended audience⁸⁸.

In sum, Ambrosiaster’s choice of exegetical method can be accounted for by his pastoral aims and the nature of the biblical books he chose to comment on. If we seek an analogue among the bevy of modern exegetical approaches, we could say that Ambrosiaster practiced the “canonical interpretation” of the Bible associated with the late Brevard Childs. This involves a focus on the “plain” sense of the text, with a concern for the relationships

82. Thus DULAËY, *Expliquer Paul dans la Rome de Damase* (n. 45), p. 86.

83. Ancient did not recognize the modern distinction between typology and allegory; thus M. SIMONETTI, *Ancora su allegoria e termini affini in alcuni scrittori greci*, in *Annali di storia dell’esegesi* 8 (1991) 363-384, p. 369.

84. CSEL 81/3, 51.2-4. His definition of *allegoria* is close to what Quintilian gives in *Inst.* 8.6.44, *aliud verbis aliud sensu ostendit* (transl. H.E. BUTLER, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 3 [LCL, 126], Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 327 “Allegory ... presents one thing in words and another in meaning”).

85. CSEL 81/3, 51.4-7: “Ishmael signifies the birth of Jews, meaning those who are servants of sin, whereas Isaac signifies the birth of Christians, since they are born to freedom. For one who receives forgiveness of sins is a free person”.

86. See his comments on Rom 4,10 as well as on 1 Cor 5,7 and 11,26. There he gives additional figurative interpretation to metaphors used in Scripture, as he does in regard to the “coals” of Rom 12,20.

87. E.g., as in *Qu. test.* 38 (CSEL 50, 65), when dealing with Ps 30,9 (LXX & Vlg. 29,10) he opens by observing that “It is not to be understood as the words sound”.

88. On Ambrosiaster in relation to Antiochene method (as well as his deviation from a historical-literal exegesis), see BUSSIÈRES, *Ambrosiaster’s Method of Interpretation* (n. 15). SIMONETTI (*Lettera e/o allegoria* [n. 23], p. 245) has observed that the *Quaestiones* “give evidence of a non-univocal mode of interpretation” and concludes that although “the literal interpretation predominates ... It is clear that Ambrosiaster did not intend to be rigidly tied to a single interpretive practice but kept himself open to deciding the matter on the basis of diverse contexts”.

of the two Testaments, for the church's Rule of Faith, and for the lived aspect of the faith in light of the biblical witnesses⁸⁹.

II. AMBROSIASTER'S PREFACES

Prefaces to textual commentaries are one of the formal features developed by literary critics in their treatment of school texts⁹⁰ that Christian commentators adopted and variously modified for their purposes. This is evident in the Greek commentators, e.g., Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia, and in early Latin commentators like Hilary⁹¹ and Marius Victorinus⁹². Most manuscripts of Ambrosiaster's commentaries designate the prefaces with *argumentum*, although *prologus* occurs as well⁹³. It is accordingly unclear whether Ambrosiaster himself employed *argumentum*, but the term was at home in the Latin school tradition. *Argumentum* occurs in ancient editions of Plautus, for thus the literary critics entitled the first section, consisting of the plot summary, of the prologues Plautus himself prefixed to his plays⁹⁴. *Argumentum* appears to translate ὑπόθεσις, which was the term with which ancient scholars labelled the prefatory material included in manuscripts of Greek plays⁹⁵. These ὑπόθεσις “intended to provide the more

89. I draw this four-point summary from D.T. OLSON, *Seeking 'the Inexpressible Texture of Thy Word': A Practical Guide to Brevard Child's Canonical Approach to Theological Exegesis*, in *Princeton Theological Review* 14 (2008) 53-68.

90. For the fuller program, see E. SCHERBENSKE, *Canonizing Paul: Ancient Editorial Practices and the Corpus Paulinum*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 62-65, 130.

91. Hilary's *Commentary on Matthew* lacks any such prologue, as it was composed before he had travelled to the east and become acquainted with Origen's appropriation of the full range of philological methods. His *Commentary on the Psalms*, however, is heavily dependent upon Origen and contains a very lengthy prologue (PL 9, 231-247), which represents a far fuller version of the form than anything in the Latin commentators on Paul, with exception of Jerome.

92. See the contributions of A. FÜRST, *Origen: Exegesis and Philosophy in Early Christian Alexandria* and S. LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Prologue Topics and Translation Problems in Latin Commentaries on Paul*, in LÖSSL – WATT (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (n. 15), 13-21 and 33-47 (respectively).

93. H.J. VOGELS, *Die Überlieferung des Ambrosiasterkommentars zu den Paulinischen Briefen* (Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen: Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 7), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959, pp. 107-142, here p. 113.

94. See the brief discussion of W. DE MELO (ed. and transl.), *Plautus*, vol. 1 (LCL, 60), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2011, p. IV.

95. For the equivalent Greek term, which did not originate with the playwrights themselves, see R. PFEIFFER, *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the Hellenistic Age*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1968, pp. 192-196. This use of *hypothesis* was only one of three technical usages, but Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.9.3-4) employed it against gnostics – the Latin translation of his work rendered it as *argumentatio* – to claim that their speculations were all wrong

scholarly reader with essential information about the play and its background”⁹⁶. For this reason, I translate *argumentum* in Ambrosiaster’s commentaries as “synopsis”.

The importance of such interpretive aids was understood. The Pauline epistles themselves early on attracted this kind of apparatus or “paratext”⁹⁷: the putatively “Marcionite Prologues”, as many scholars have thought since the early twentieth century⁹⁸. Originally written in Greek, these prologues have survived only in Latin, as prefaced to *Vetus Latina* manuscripts of the Pauline epistles. Whatever their origin, the importance of these VL prologues for the Latin commentators was noted by Karl Schäfer, who observed their impact upon the commentaries of Ambrosiaster and Marius Victorinus⁹⁹. This is transparent in a number of places, e.g., Ambrosiaster’s *argumentum* to Philippians clearly relates information found in the VL prologue to the Corinthian epistles¹⁰⁰. Below we will discuss elements of the VL prologue to Colossians recurring in his commentary on that letter.

Ambrosiaster’s prefaces are generally very brief by comparison with secular models and with the biblical commentaries of Origen, Jerome, and Theodore.

because they began with an incorrect synopsis or overview of the Christian faith. For discussion, see A. BRIGGMAN, *Literary and Rhetorical Theory in Irenaeus, Part 1*, in *VigChr* 69 (2015) 500-527, here, pp. 502-505.

96. Thus W.S. BARRETT, *Euripides: Hippolytos*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1964, p. 153. For fuller discussion see W. LUPPE, ΣΚΟΛΑΙ, ὙΠΟΜΝΗΜΑΤΑ und ὙΠΟΘΕΣΕΙΣ zu griechischen Dramen auf Papyri, in GEERLINGS – SCHULZE, *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter* (n. 48), 55-77.

97. On paratexts, see SCHERBENSKE, *Canonizing Paul* (n. 90), pp. 1-6, *et passim*.

98. This hypothesis was first developed by D. DE BRUYNE, *Prologues bibliques d'origine Marcionite*, in *RBen* 24 (1907) 1-16 and P. CORSEN, *Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des Römerbriefs*, in *ZNW* 10 (1909) 1-45, 97-102. Their arguments for Marcionite origins were rejected by, M.-J. LAGRANGE, *Les Prologues prétendus marcionites*, in *Revue Biblique* 35 (1926) 161-173, and by N. DAHL, *The Origin of the Earliest Prologues to the Pauline Letters*, in *Semeia* 12 (1978) 233-277. For full discussion with reference to the older literature, see SCHERBENSKE, *Canonizing Paul* (n. 90), pp. 71-115. More recent arguments in favor of a Marcionite origin are maintained by D. JONGKIND, *On the Marcionite Prologues to the Letters of Paul*, in D. GURTNER – J. HERNÁNDEZ, Jr. – P. FOSTER (eds.), *Studies on the Text of the New Testament and Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Michael W. Holmes* (New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents, 50), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2015, 389-407.

99. K. SCHÄFER, *Marius Victorinus und die marcionitischen Prologe zu den Paulusbriefen*, in *RBen* 4 (1970) 7-16, and ID., *Marcion und die ältesten Prologe zu den Paulusbriefen*, in P. GRANFIELD – J. JUNGSMANN (eds.), *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. 1, Münster, Aschendorff, 1970, 135-150.

100. The concluding line of Ambrosiaster’s preface to Philippians states: *Corinthii enim multo tempore audientes apostolorum recedente eo a diversis pseudoapostolis fuerant eversi*. The *Vetus Latina* prologue to the Corinthian correspondence states: *Corinthii sunt Achaei. et hi similiter ab apostolo audierunt verbum veritatis, et subversi multifarie a falsis apostolis, quidam a philosophiae verbosa eloquentia, alii a secta legis Iudaicae inducti* (cited from JONGKIND, *On the Marcionite Prologues* [n. 98], p. 393).

With exception of the *argumenta* he composed for his commentaries on Romans and Galatians, Ambrosiaster provides only the most basic information about each letter, the historical context, and the main lines of Paul's response. The *argumentum* of the Romans commentary is fifty-one lines in the Vienna Corpus edition, which vastly exceeds the length of the prefaces in his other commentaries, save that on Galatians. There the *argumentum* extends to forty-five lines and recapitulates Ambrosiaster's regular defense of a non-Torah observant gospel, based on Isa 10,22-23 (as quoted by Paul in Rom 9,28). The commentary on 1 Corinthians has an *argumentum* of twenty-five lines, that on 2 Corinthians has one of sixteen lines and the rest have even briefer ones, with the *argumenta* on Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon consisting only of a sentence or two. The lengthier *argumenta* contain more original material and are generally less dependent on the very brief VL prologues than his short prefaces to the minor epistles; the *argumentum* on Colossians represents an exception to this pattern in containing more original material¹⁰¹.

Ambrosiaster's *argumenta* to the commentaries on Romans and Galatians open with general statements of principle relevant particularly to the epistle in question. The other *argumenta* begin directly with the matter at hand, that is, the situation of the churches addressed. Even his briefest prefaces contain a synopsis of the situation to which the apostle had to respond, often with an indication of the main lines of Paul's attempts to address the issues. The *argumentum* on 1 Corinthians contains the fullest version of this latter kind of sketch, where Ambrosiaster observes there are *multae causae* "on account of which he writes to them". Then he lists ten particular points requiring clarification or correction, along with an unspecified number of other concerns (*reliquae sunt causae*) to be shown in the body of the work¹⁰². The *argumentum* on Romans opens with a statement of principle that Alessandra Pollastri has compared to Thucydides and Polybius¹⁰³:

In order to have an understanding of things, one needs to grasp their origins [*principia*]. In fact, only if one is familiar with this book will it be easier to explain the reason for the dispute [*causae ratio*]. Accordingly, if we describe the

101. RASPANTI, *Aspetti formali* (n. 68), p. 512-513: "nelle epistole minori, visibilmente meno curate, l'anonimo si è attenuato maggiormente alle scarse notizie che trovava nei prologhi e le ha seguito pedissequamente". Ambrosiaster's *argumentum* on Ephesians is almost entirely dependent on the VL prologue to that letter, at least as reconstructed by modern scholars (see DE BRUYNE, *Prologues bibliques* [n. 98], p. 14).

102. CSEL 81/2, 3-4.

103. A. POLLASTRI, *Il prologo del commento alla Lettera ai Romani dell'Ambrosiaster*, in *Studi storico-religiosi* 2 (1978) 93-127, p. 99.

approach and motive of the letter before us [*epistolae datae modum et rationem*], it can be seen that what we say is true¹⁰⁴.

Joachim Stüben has observed that Ambrosiaster lays out “a simple but sound methodology” and notes how his *argumentum* refers to *ratio* and *causae*, much as did Tacitus in *Hist.* 1.4¹⁰⁵. The parallel is striking, but *causa* here does not refer to historical causes (as in Tacitus) but to the dispute which Paul wrote to resolve with his letter. The “reason for the dispute”, as he goes on to relate by describing the origin of the Roman church, is not what the VL prologue to this letter alleged: that the Roman Christians “were reached beforehand by false apostles and under the name of our Lord Jesus Christ had been led on to the Law and the Prophets”¹⁰⁶. Indeed, Ambrosiaster’s account rejects any such attempt to attribute the founding of the church at Rome to “false apostles”¹⁰⁷. Rather he, along with many modern scholars¹⁰⁸, maintains that the church arose among Christian Jews residing in Rome, who spread the word to gentiles in the city and “taught the Romans that those who confess Christ should keep the law”¹⁰⁹.

In this way Ambrosiaster supplies a plausible, albeit apologetic historical account for the origin of the church, an account that does not imply anything erroneous in its foundation and simultaneously explains the origin of the conflict addressed in the letter. Further in the *argumentum* where he presents a fuller reconstruction of the origins of the Roman church, he allows that during this early period there was confusion about the matter. But rather than the nefarious activity of “false apostles” he posits in the case of 2 Corinthians and Galatians, “those believers [at Rome], then, who came from a Jewish background and had a mistaken understanding of Christ were quick to say that the law should be kept, as if in Christ there was no

104. CSEL 81/1, 5.3-6, *rec. γ*: *Principia rerum requirenda sunt, ut notitia earum possit haberi; tunc demum enim facilius poterit causae ratio declari, si liber iste discatur; si ergo epistolae datae modum et rationem ostenderit, potest verum videri quod dicimus* (transl. DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster’s Commentary on Romans* [n. 5], p. 3).

105. J. STÜBEN, *Erasmus von Rotterdam und der Ambrosiaster: Zur Identifikationsgeschichte einer wichtigen Quelle Augustins*, in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 60 (1997) 3-22, p. 10. Cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.4 (ed. C.H. MOORE [LCL, 111], p. 8): *ut non modo casus eventusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio etiam causaeque noscantur* (Stüben mistakenly gives the reference to Tacitus’ *Annals* instead of the *Histories*).

106. English transl. cited from JONGKIND, *On the Marcionite Prologues* (n. 98), p. 394.

107. On Rom 15,24 Ambrosiaster explains that although “false apostles” had hindered Paul in his plans to visit the Roman church thus far, he also states that they had not themselves reached Rome: “Because it was difficult for the false apostles to reach them, there was no harm if the apostle came later” (CSEL 81/1, 470.14-15).

108. J.A. FITZMYER, *Romans* (Anchor Bible, 3), New York, Doubleday, 1992, pp. 29-30.

109. CSEL 81/1, 7.1-2, *rec. γ* (transl. DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster’s Commentary on Romans* [n. 5], p. 3).

complete salvation”¹¹⁰. Although these early Roman Christians resembled the Galatians in their error¹¹¹, they did not arouse the apostle’s anger but evoked his praise, since they accepted the gospel without seeing any signs of miracles, something in accord with what Ambrosiaster frames as the typical Roman trait of being *prudentes*. Because they accepted the gospel in this distorted form (*corrupto sensu*), he concludes that “they had not heard of the mystery of the cross of Christ”. Fortunate, then, was the arrival of Aquila and Priscilla, “who understood the faith rightly”, but subsequently there arose questions about eating meat; and the comments on 14,1 revisit the founding of the Roman church by those who retained a sense of obligation to the Torah¹¹². The main argument of Romans, then, is the question how Christians are to regard the prescriptions and prohibitions of the law. He concludes the *argumentum*, accordingly, with a summary of how the law was valid only until John the Baptist, after which faith stands as an “abbreviation of the law” (*abbreviatio facta legis*)¹¹³. This phrase is Ambrosiaster’s condensed paraphrase of Rom 9,28 (based on Isa 10,22-23 as quoted by Paul) and it is central to his assertion of the supersession of Jewish law, as one can infer from his remarks on Rom 9,28¹¹⁴ and the repetition of the point in his *argumentum* to Galatians¹¹⁵.

Ambrosiaster’s prefaces on Romans and Galatians illustrate how he incorporated elements of Pauline theology into the late fourth-century ecclesiastical context, which assumed Christian non-observance of certain aspects of the law. His work on Colossians further exemplifies how the central content of the epistle under consideration channels the commentator’s attention to germane aspects of his social-historical context.

110. *Recensiones* α and β have: “Those, then, who believed in Christ from a Jewish background did not accept, as one is given to understand, that Christ is God from God, thinking that this is contrary to the one God”. The difference between *recensiones* α and β and *recensio* γ here is significant. Whereas in the first two recensions Ambrosiaster argues that the error of the believers from a Jewish background was that they denied the divinity of Christ, in the third recension Ambrosiaster argues their error was to insist that believers should continue to observe the law. POLLASTRI, *Il prologo del Commento alla lettera ai Romani* (n. 103), pp. 100-120, argues that Ambrosiaster’s efforts to explain Gal 3,20 in the *Quaestiones* (CSEL 50, 473-475) and the commentary on Galatians led him to revise his interpretation of the position of Jewish believers in Romans.

111. See the opening of the *argumentum* of the commentary on Galatians (CSEL 81/3, 3.3-11), where Ambrosiaster connects Torah-observant forms of Christianity with the theological error of failing to grasp how the divinity of Christ is a sufficient principle of salvation, one that continued dependence on the law implicitly undermines.

112. CSEL 81/1, 433.12-15.

113. CSEL 81/1, 7.23.

114. CSEL 81/1, 333.23.

115. CSEL 81/3, 3.16-18–4.1-2.

III. AMBROSIASTER ON COLOSSIANS

The commentary on Colossians is a clear example of Ambrosiaster's utilization of the slim data given in the *Vetus Latina* prologue. That prologue reads as follows:

The Colossians too, like the Laodiceans, are of Asia. They too had been reached beforehand by false apostles, and the apostle himself did not come to them; but he corrects them also by a letter; for they had heard the word from Archippus, who also accepted a ministry to them. So the apostle, already in bonds, writes to them from Ephesus¹¹⁶.

Ambrosiaster's *argumentum* lays out in more detail the situation of the church, the motive of the "false apostles", and the intention of Paul in writing the letter:

False apostles were trying to subvert the Colossians¹¹⁷. After the preaching of Epaphras or Archippus, false apostles ensnared the sincere minds of the Colossians through philosophical discussions. They did this to prevent the Colossians from rejecting systems of the elements [*rationes elementorum*]¹¹⁸, the elements by which human life is supposedly governed. For this reason, the apostle exhorts and urges them by letter not to think that there is any hope beyond Christ and so be deceived¹¹⁹.

The note about of the subversion of the Colossians by the *pseudoapostoli* echoes the claim of the VL prologue that the Colossians *praeventi erant a pseudoapostolis*. That prologue, however, said nothing of Epaphras, who figures in Col 1,7 and 4,12, but mentions Archippus as the man from whom "the Colossians had heard the word". Epaphras, as Ambrosiaster clearly noted, was recommended by the apostle, as "our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ" (1,7), the very one from whom the

116. *Colossenses et hi sicut Laodicenses sunt Asiani; et ipsi praeventi erant a pseudoapostolis, nec ad hos accessit ipse apostolus, sed et hos per epistulam recorrigit. Audierant enim verbum ab Archippo, qui et ministerium in eos accepit. Ergo apostolus iam ligatus scribit eis ab Epheso* (transl. JONGKIND, *On the Marcionite Prologues* [n. 98], p. 394, slightly altered).

117. *Recensio* a has: "False apostles were trying to subvert these people, that is, the Colossians".

118. The *elementa* (= στοιχεῖα) are mentioned at Col 2,8 and 2,20. Ambrosiaster associates generally the veneration of the elements with pagan worship (cf. his remarks on Gal 3,20, 4,3 and – with regard to astrology – his comments on Gal 4,10). For discussion, see DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster's Commentary on Romans* (n. 5), pp. XCVIII–CII.

119. CSEL 81/3, 167.3–9: *Colossenses pseudoapostoli evertere nitebantur, ut post praedicationem Epaphrae sive Arcippi filosoficis disputationibus inretirent simplicitatem mentis eorum, ne spererent rationes elementorum, quibus quasi gubernatur vita humana. idcirco hos apostolus per epistolam hortatur et admonet, ne alicubi praeter Christum aliquam esse spem putarent et deciperentur.*

Colossians first “heard and understood the grace of God in truth (1,6). Epaphras was “the one who ministered Christ’s grace to them in the absence of the apostle”¹²⁰; and Ambrosiaster in commenting on 4,17 adds that Epaphras had baptized the Colossians. It was only later that Archippus “accepted the duty of pastoring their church”¹²¹. This could explain why Ambrosiaster placed Epaphras’ name in first position in the *argumentum* when referring to these two men.

The *pseudoapostoli* go unmentioned in the body of the commentary, despite their emphatic position in the VL prologue and in Ambrosiaster’s preface. This is peculiar, suggesting that although he regarded the prologues as valid or authoritative, his independent analysis of the epistolary text took precedent over it. The remainder of the *argumentum* presents material not in the prologue. The “philosophical disputations” by which the “false apostles” ensnared the Colossians relate to with what Ambrosiaster calls the *rationes elementorum*, “systems of the elements”, as I translate it. The term *elementa* is how the VL (and Vlg.) rendered στοιχεῖα, e.g., in Col 2,8: *Videte ne quis vos depraedetur*¹²² *per filosofiam et inanem fallaciam secundum traditionem hominum, secundum elementa huius mundi* [κατὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου] *et non secundum Christum*. As the *elementa huius mundi* are presented in this verse as antithetical to what is *secundum Christum*, Ambrosiaster relates the *elementa* to pagan religious practices (as he did in his comments on Gal 4,10¹²³), which he takes to be the central target of the apostle’s polemics

120. CSEL 81/3, 168.25.

121. CSEL 81/3, 206.26-27.

122. Ambrosiaster’s first edition of this commentary (*recensio* α) has *seducat* (“seduce”) instead of *depraedetur* (“plunder”) found in *recensio* g, which in one manuscript has *deprebentetur* (“catch hold of”); Vlg. has *decipiat*. Ambrosiaster appears to have been familiar with several VL versions of the Pauline epistles, as he cites this verse in *Qu. app.* 67.1 (CSEL 50, 461) with the verb as *circumveniat* (“deceive”). *Depraedetur* is a better rendering of the Greek ὁ συλλαγωγῶν (the participle being rendered by the VL as a finite verb), but even if we suspend our conclusion that Ambrosiaster knew little or no Greek (see discussion in DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster’s Commentary on Romans* [n. 5], p. LXVII), it is difficult to suppose that he would have altered his VL text, to which he grants great authority (see n. 53 *supra*); it is more likely that the biblical text underlying his commentaries reflects (pre-Vulgate) corrections at Rome of the Latin text. The reading of *recensio* α (*seducat*), moreover, is supported by the occurrence of *seducere* twice in the comment; there is no trace in the comment of the somewhat different meaning of *depraedetur*.

123. CSEL 81/3, 46.2-21, where he discusses how the courses of the sun and moon structure the Roman calendar with its celebration of days devoted to the gods like Vulcan and Janus. Of the *egena et infirma elementa* of Gal 4,9 he states *ea quae paganorum sunt sequi coeperant* (*ibid.*, 45.19-20). On Gal 4,3 he relates the mention of “elements of this world” to Judaism, because of the specification that “we” (= the pre-conversion Paul) were in subjection *sub elementis huius mundi* (meaning, serving God according to the calendrical observances of the Jewish holidays); and in *Qu. test.* 82 (CSEL 50, 139.10-22), he gave a

in Colossians. The inference is arguably justifiable in light of Col 2,20, where life according to the “elements of this world” is contrasted with life in Christ: *Si mortui estis cum Christo ab elementis huius mundi* [NA²⁸: ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου], *quid tamquam viventes in hoc mundo* [ἐν κόσμῳ] *decernitis?* These are opposing manners of being in the world, as Ambrosiaster emphasizes in his comments on Col 3,5 that refer to the *evangelica ratio* – “system of the gospel” – as something they have received and need to preserve through a lifestyle appropriate to the “good life” of their new religion¹²⁴.

Modern exegetes agree with Ambrosiaster in regarding Col 2,8 as part of the polemical core of the letter, but they differ from him in attempting to identify a discrete group of opponents or a particular philosophical school behind the apostle’s polemics¹²⁵. Ambrosiaster by contrast frames the issue in his *argumentum* to be about “philosophical disputations” rather than philosophy *per se*. Hence his assertion that the “false apostles” employed such disputations to turn the Colossians back to religious observations based on *rationes elementorum, quibus quasi gubernatur vita humana*¹²⁶, not to recruit them to a specific philosophical school. Below we will examine how Ambrosiaster in treating other passages of this letter applies this language of *elementa mundi*, which he takes to indicate the supreme visible realities of the cosmos – especially the *astra*, which in Roman terminology could mean both planets and stars, “the heavenly bodies”¹²⁷ – to pagan and Jewish religious observances.

very brief treatment of how Jews and pagans differ in this matter, noting how a change in a single syllable can make a great difference in the meaning (the word *sub* in the Pauline text). For discussion of the complicated exegeses of Paul’s various mentions of the *elementa* among the Latin commentators, see COOPER, *Marius Victorinus’ Commentary on Galatians* (n. 29), pp. 218-225.

124. CSEL 81/3, 193.19-22: *ut post acceptam ac servatam evangelicam de salvatoris plenitudine rationem bonae vitae operam darent abstinentes se ab omni turpitudine et desiderio malo, quo possint peritiae divinae fructum non amittere.*

125. See, e.g., T.W. MARTIN, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique* (SupplJST, 118), Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996. More typical of commentators is to see the opponents at Colossae as Jewish and/or teaching a “gnosticizing syncretism”, as in the overview of J.D.G. DUNN, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1996, pp. 23-35. Cf. also R. DEMARIS, *The Colossians Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae* (SupplJST, 96), Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1994, pp. 18-40, who lists five main proposals for identifying the opponents and their teachings.

126. CSEL 81/3, 167.6-7. Ambrosiaster employed similar language in *Qu. test.* 114.2 (CSEL 50, 304.4-5): *Sed solent ab his exclusi ad elementa confugere, dicentes haec se colere quorum gubernaculis regitur vita humana.*

127. CSEL 81/3, 181.23–182.6.

The other unusual features of Colossians – the extended thanksgiving and prayer of 1,3-23 and the apostle’s “personal statement” (1,24–2,5)¹²⁸ – are similarly treated by Ambrosiaster. He interprets these passages as containing at least implicit criticisms of the same religious dangers – erroneous practices – that he enumerates after his warning against this vaguely defined “philosophy” (2,8-23). The mention of restrictions of food and drink (2,16) elicits anti-Jewish polemics¹²⁹. For the most part, however, it is pagan practices and beliefs that Ambrosiaster presents as the real threat, both to the Colossians and by implication to his own audience.

Thanksgiving for the Colossians (Col 1,3-8)

After the salutation (1,1-3a), Ambrosiaster treats the first section of prayer and thanksgiving briskly through a condensed paraphrase designed to answer the most basic questions about what is going on in the epistolary text. His comments on the lemma 1,3b-6a consist of a single sentence, the clauses of which appear to address questions implicit in these verses. He first explains why the apostle is giving thanks to God: “Because God considered it worthwhile to entrust his own Son to these people [*dignum habuit deus credere istis filium*], Paul offers thanks to God in his prayers”. He immediately addresses another question about what Paul heard concerning the Colossians, such as would explain his extended thanksgiving, namely, “the love which the Colossians have for the saints, trusting that by virtue of this love their hope before God is certain”. What is the nature of their hope? “In this hope one believes that God is going to repay those who believe and love each other mutually, as Christ is their founder [*auctore Christo*], whose name ‘has reached’ all peoples so that they would be multiplied in his faith”¹³⁰. His comment reuses only a few elements of the vocabulary in these verses, most interestingly in his paraphrasing *pervenit ad vos* (Col 1,6a) into *pervenit ad omnes gentes*. This clarification draws attention Paul’s gentile mission. This is in line with Ambrosiaster’s fondness for the appellation *magister gentium* for Paul (1 Tim 2,7), “teacher of the gentiles”¹³¹.

128. Here I largely follow the language and outline, with some modifications, of DUNN, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (n. 125), pp. 41-42.

129. CSEL 81/3, 188.2-21. The opening line of this comment is notable in that Ambrosiaster unites paganism and Judaism insofar as they appear to offer religious hope apart from Christ: *quoniam omnis spes in Christo est ac fiducia, nulli superstitioni aut legi subicere nos debere praecepit*.

130. CSEL 83/3, 168.7-13.

131. The appellation recurs in his remarks on Rom 1,14; 15,15; 2 Cor 10,7; Gal 2,8; 5,2.

The second part of his comments on the thanksgiving (1,6b-8) is an explanatory paraphrase that fills out some details of the history of the Colossian church and presents Paul's feelings as he wrote about how the gospel was "bearing fruit and growing ... among you". At the same time, Ambrosiaster also explains an element of a previous lemma, the address in the salutation, "to the saints and to faithful brothers" (1,2). He writes:

With joyful speech Paul goes on to say, as an example for other gentiles, that the Colossians are increasing and producing lively fruit. The result is that on the basis of having received God's grace, they are making progress, adding to their faith in both numbers and effort. These are the ones who became "brothers" with Paul and Timothy in Christ¹³².

The clarification of the final sentence about why Paul called them "faithful brothers", seems to have been necessitated by the fact that in his other letters the honorific title "brother" is reserved for his co-workers like Sosthenes (1 Cor 1,1) and Timothy (2 Cor 1,1; 1 Thess 3,2; Philem 1,1)¹³³. But who are the "other gentiles" for whom the Colossians are an *exemplum*: are they Colossians who are not quite "saints" or reliably faithful, or Laodiceans of similar stripes? Paul's mention in verse seven of Epaphras, "our beloved fellow servant", brings Ambrosiaster to expand on the text: "by the example of the Colossians' good works, many were drawn to them, as Epaphras is their witness, who ministered Christ's grace to them in the apostle's stead"¹³⁴. Epaphras is clearly the key figure for the Colossians in Ambrosiaster's interpretation of the letter.

Prayer for the Colossians (Col 1,9-14)

The apostle prays in 1,9b-10 "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding so that you would walk worthily of the Lord, to please him totally in every good work". Why was the apostle praying for them, what was he seeking on their behalf? "Hearing about their devout and resolute will in regards to the faith of Christ, Paul prays for them so that they would fulfill their devotion, which they had learned by hearing the faith of Christ"¹³⁵. Although the lemma under treatment actually says nothing about the will of the Colossians but refers to the will of God, Ambrosiaster supplies a note about their *voluntas devota ac*

132. CSEL 81/3, 168.20-22.

133. Ambrosiaster discusses reasons for the varying salutations in other letters on 1 and 2 Corinthians (CSEL 81/2, 4.13-18; 195.20-196.2).

134. CSEL 81/3, 168.23-27.

135. CSEL 81/3, 169.4-7.

prompta as the reason for Paul's hope for them as expressed in this prayer. What Paul was seeking in prayer Ambrosiaster relates in his typical *ut*-clause: "so that they would fulfill their devotion more intentionally in a sensible work [*opere rationabili*], now that the will of God has been made known"¹³⁶. This idea of an *opus rationabilis* seems to be his explanation of what Paul's vague phrase "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (1,9) that would lead them to "walk worthily ... in every good work" (1,10). Ambrosiaster does not relate the phrase *in omni sapientia et intellectu spiritali* to a conceptual body of knowledge or an esoteric philosophy – that was the game of the opponents – but to the mental capacity necessary to perform any good work. An *opus rationabilis* thus means a work that has been properly planned, "lest so faithful a resolution of mind and the heartiness of faith lose the fruit of its labor through taking on something inadvisably and ineptly". There is a right way and a wrong way to go about doing good, he concludes: "What comes from a devout mind and is done prudently is readily accounted to their credit"¹³⁷.

An admonition to give thanks to God the Father, with heavy dogmatic content, concludes Paul's prayer, which in the previous lemma included the Colossians through second-person plural subjunctives. Growing and bearing fruit as the apostle prays, they will be "giving thanks to the Father, who called us to a share of the fortune of the saints in the light, who freed us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption, forgiveness of sins" (1,12-13). What is the apostle saying with this admonition to give thanks to the Father? Ambrosiaster paraphrases the opening clause of his lemma (1,10b-13) – "Bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God" – and connects it to the dramatically expressed narrative of salvation at the conclusion of v. 13: "He wants there to be growth in their works, along with knowledge, so that they would not overlook the hope of their faith". What is this hope that belongs to their faith (*fidei suae spem*)? Their transference into the kingdom of Christ from a place of darkness. By growing in their works (*crementum operum eorum*) that Colossians will be *firmiter et stabiles*, if – Ambrosiaster stipulates – "they pay attention to the things promised in return for faith", and if they observe how God puts up with the *humanum genus* despite its *inreverentia*, its neglect of the creator, and its persecution of those who love God. Those on the receiving end of this persecution should cultivate patience and be prepared "to bear with the abuses and curses of the faithless", having no doubt about God but rejoicing in the promises of life. In all this, however, they

136. CSEL 81/3, 169.5-7.

137. CSEL 81/3, 169.4-11.

should be “giving thanks to God, who deemed it worthy to summon the gentiles and lead them into the promise made to the Jews of eternal light, that is, everlasting truth”¹³⁸.

The second part of his comment on the same lemma details the implications of the gentiles’ inheritance of the promises made to the Jews: “Freed from the condition of darkness – this is, rescued from the depths in which we were being held by the devil as much through our own transgression as through that of Adam, who is the father of all sinners – we have been ‘transferred’ through faith into the heavenly ‘kingdom of the Son’ of God”¹³⁹. The alternative scenario, laid out in Ambrosiaster’s comment on 1,14, is not good: “without the faith of Christ, there is no exit from the underworld, since anyone liable for his sins cannot pass outside the gates of hell”. This again reinforces the exclusivity of the church’s means of salvation and emphasizes the necessity of gentile adherence to the faith along with the performance of appropriate works. Thus Ambrosiaster’s comments on 1,9-10, building on Paul’s prayer, display the mind of a pastor intent on solidifying his audience in their religion.

The Christ-Hymn (Col 1,15-20)

Unlike modern scholars who find this passage to be an early Christian hymn or its remnants¹⁴⁰, Ambrosiaster does not treat this passage as a formally distinct literary unit from the surrounding epistolary context, i.e., the prayer with its pronounced dogmatic content. His comments on Col 1,15-20 explicate the doctrinal aspects of the pericope and give them apologetic application. The phrase *imago dei invisibilis* (RSV: “the image of the invisible God”) receives a preliminary gloss to clarify that the commandments against worshipping images establish the parameters of acceptable interpretation for the term “image”:

There can be no visible image of the invisible God; it is also not an image in other respects. For what is invisible cannot be painted, nor can the visible see the invisible. For what is seen is either a body, or a figure, or some unformed substance which the eyesight conveys, something totally bodily at any rate. But how can God, who is far removed from all these things, have a visible image¹⁴¹?

138. CSEL 81/1, 169.20-24–170.1-6.

139. CSEL 81/3, 170.6-10.

140. For a defense of the hymn-hypothesis, see WILSON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (n. 47), pp. 123-127.

141. CSEL 81/3, 170.23–171.1: *invisibilis Dei imago visibilis esse non potest, alioquin nec imago; quod enim invisibile est, pingi non potest, nec enim visibilis potest invisibilem videre; aut enim corpus est quod videtur, aut figura aut aliqua informata substantia, quam fert acies*

But why did the apostle employ such a potentially perilous term like “image” for the Son?

The matter, however, is expressed thus for this reason: so that the Son would be understood to be the same sort of being as the Father [*talis filius intellegatur, qualis est pater*]. Accordingly, because the Son is from the Father and differs in no respect from the Father in regards of the divinity of his nature, the Son is said to be the image and form of the Father [*imago eius dicatur et forma*], lest he be believed by the faithless to be another god, although he is comprised in this same term. He is for that reason said to be a true son, so that he would be believed to be from the Father himself¹⁴².

Ambrosiaster’s coupling of “image” and “form” in the phrase *imago eius dicatur et forma* suggests the need to interpret these terms, whose primary sense is visual, in a way unrelated to corporeal visibility but to an identity of nature apparent in the case of visual objects where one was obviously the image of the other. In this way he manages to interpret the language of the text in a pro-Nicene direction, as is evident in his note that the Son “differs in no respect from the Father in regards of the divinity of his nature”. The term “image”, he goes on to say, was added *propter malam intelligentiam*, namely, to correct possible misunderstanding of the divine theophanies in the Hebrew Bible, which Ambrosiaster, following early Christian tradition (e.g., Justin, *Dial.* 61; Tertullian, *Prax.* 14), regarded as appearances not of the Father but the Son¹⁴³. The contemporizing character of his exposition is further evident in the creedal language he quotes after invoking Jesus’ conversation with Philip in the Fourth Gospel (John 14,9-10): “This is the unity and consubstantiality [*consubstantialitas*] of the Father and the Son, that they are related to each other [*ut invicem sint*] so that one who sees the Son would also see the Father”¹⁴⁴. God the Father, as he notes in concluding his comments on this lemma, “has never appeared in any way, just as is stated in the gospel, ‘no one has ever seen God’ [John 1,18]”¹⁴⁵. The Johannine

oculorum, totum tamen corpus est, Deus autem, qui ab his omnibus alienus est, quomodo potest imaginem habere visibilem?

142. CSEL 81/3, 171.2-6: *sed ideo sic dicitur, ut talis filius intellegatur, qualis est Pater, ut, quia de ipso est et nihil distat ab eo in divinitate naturae, imago eius dicatur et forma, ne alius deus a perfidis crederetur, quamvis nomine ipso hoc contineatur. ideo enim verus filius dicitur, ut de ipso esse credatur.*

143. CSEL 81/3, 171.6-11. On Ambrosiaster’s tendency to mix archaic christological and trinitarian utterances with the more advanced creedal formulations of the fourth century, see MARTINI, *Ambrosiaster* (n. 10), pp. 76, 92-96.

144. CSEL 81/3, 171.13-15. For Ambrosiaster’s other formulations in his commentaries supportive of the Nicene Creed (and its slight revision at the council of Constantinople in 381), see DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster’s Commentary on Romans* (n. 5), pp. LXXXII-LXXXIX.

145. CSEL 81/3, 171.24-25.

passages essentially support his implicit claim that the terms “image” and “form” refer not to corporeal seeing but to the mind’s seeing, its possession of knowledge.

The remainder of the passage (Col 1,16-20) Ambrosiaster treats similarly to elucidate the doctrinal and soteriological aspects of the Pauline language. His remarks to 1,16 conclude on the note that this verse states how “all things are through him”, “precisely so one would believe that in the Son there was nothing in any way less than what is in the Father”¹⁴⁶. Creedal language is echoed in his remark on 1,17 that “he [*sc.* Christ] alone is born from God the Father, from the unbegotten substance [*de ingenita utique substantia*] of God, clearly”¹⁴⁷. Likewise Ambrosiaster expositis the phrase “in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (1,19; RSV) to indicate that Christ “is fully God [*deum esse perfectum*], for one who does not have power over all these things [i.e., the thrones, dominions, etc. of Col 1,16] is not God”¹⁴⁸. Stimulated by the phrase “through the blood of his cross”, his comments on 1,20 shift from the trinitarian to the christological and soteriological issues, highlighting the Incarnation as the means to reconcile all things to the creator¹⁴⁹.

Moving beyond the discussion of the cosmic powers implicated in the Christ-event, Ambrosiaster turns to focus on the gentile believers addressed in the epistle, as signaled by Col 1,21-22. This verse brings the point of Christ as Savior home to the audience with the turn to a second-person address: “and you were once estranged, etc.”. Ambrosiaster amplifies the situation in his paraphrase and establishes the context in the history of salvation:

He recalls what kind of gift God gave to the gentiles, in order to show them to be debtors, indeed, much obliged to give thanks to God, who when the gentiles were hostile to his plans decided to visit the human race through his servant Moses. Devoted to their idols, they did not accept the doctrine and authority of Moses, because they were engaged in wrongful deeds. For they were worshipping their own works, things which they made. But God’s mercy and providence sought them out, so that they would obtain the grace of God as a free gift, returning to God with a clean conscience¹⁵⁰.

With this notion that gentiles refused to accept the Mosaic law, Ambrosiaster seems to be familiar with the Jewish line of thought that God first offered

146. CSEL 81/3, 172.23-24.

147. CSEL 81/3, 173.1-2.

148. CSEL 81/3, 174.21-23.

149. CSEL 81/3, 174.13-14.

150. CSEL 81/3, 175.7-16.

the Torah to all the peoples of the world¹⁵¹. This idea works to highlight the difference between Jews and gentiles in their respective histories and to emphasize the grace the latter have received, as he states on Col 1,27:

He is asserting that the mystery, which was concealed “from the ages” is now revealed. This means that it was made known from the time of the apostles that the gentiles were also to be admitted, without circumcision of the flesh, to the faith of Christ, who had been promised to the Jews. For previously – before the proclamation of faith – it was mandated that gentiles be circumcised if they had wanted to come to the law. But now by God’s mercy they have been commanded to be taken into the faith just as they are. This for the Jews was considered intolerable [*indignum putabatur Iudaeis*]: that the Christ, in whom the Jews’ hope lay, would make even the gentiles to be sharers in his glory¹⁵².

This theme of Jewish hostility to God’s dispensation for the gentiles is elsewhere amplified by Ambrosiaster into a motif of Jewish jealousy. This comes to the fore in his commentaries on Romans and Galatians¹⁵³, which is readily explicable there on account of issues concerning the Jewish law. But as Jews are hardly mentioned in Colossians – they are alluded to in 2,11, 3,11, and 4,11¹⁵⁴ – this motif in the commentary on this letter would seem to be a case where Ambrosiaster has imported it into his reading of this particular epistle as a regular feature of the apostle’s thought. It is may also be a signal of his contemporary concerns, which find expression in such anti-Jewish asides that act as foils to his picture of the gentiles as those “circumcised in Christ” – as he says in remarks on Col 2,11 – once they have “cut off the form of worship characteristic of every human tradition” (*amputata totius traditionis humanae cultura*), which in the case of the gentiles is idolatry¹⁵⁵.

151. For discussion of this point in the halakhic midrashim on Exodus and Deuteronomy (*MekhSha Bah.* 5, and *SifDev.* 343), see S.D. FRAADE, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy*, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, pp. 32-36.

152. CSEL 81/3, 177.14-23.

153. See especially his remarks on Rom 10,19 (CSEL 81/1, 359.11-20) and Gal 3,13 (CSEL 81/3, 35.15-20), with discussion in DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster’s Commentary on Romans* (n. 5), p. cv. See also DI SANTO, *L’apologetica* (n. 38), p. 192.

154. J.P. HEIL, *Colossians: Encouragement to Walk in All Wisdom as Holy Ones in Christ* (Early Christianity and Its Literature, 4), Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2010, p. 8: “The audience were probably mainly believers of Gentile origin. ... Yet this audience of former Gentiles seem to be familiar with some of the practices of Jews and probably also included former Jews, as indicated by the references to circumcision (2:11) and sabbaths (2:16)”. Cf. P. POKORNÝ, *Colossians: A Commentary*, transl. S.S. Schatzmann, Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 1991, p. 20: “The majority of them were uncircumcised Gentile Christians (2:13)”. Likewise WILSON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (n. 47), p. 8.

155. CSEL 81/3, 183.20-21.

Christ Is the Only Hope for the Colossians and Everyone Else (Col 2,1-5)

This theme of the sufficiency of Christ and a corresponding total rejection of pagan religion as futile and sinful idolatry is taken up again in his comments on 2,1-5. There Paul addresses himself more personally to the Colossians (2,1: *volo enim vos scire*) and shows his concern for the believers of Laodicea whom he has not met. What was the danger facing those communities that elicited this remark from the apostle? The sufficiency of Christ for salvation emerges with the mention in 2,3 of Christ, “in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge have been hidden”. Ambrosiaster clarifies the apostle’s strategy, who wants both Colossians and Laodiceans to know that those whom he had not met are as beloved to him as those whom he evangelized in person (*praesens praedicabat*):

He aims to foster their minds in love, so that they would be made ready through the letter to receive the recognition of God’s revelation [*agnitionem accipere sacramenti dei*] in Christ, as they perceive that these are the riches of wisdom and knowledge: if Christ is recognized as the one to be worshipped in the fullness of his divinity. The whole mystery, therefore, of God’s revelation [*omne igitur mysterium sacramenti dei*] lies in Christ. For he is the one in relation to whom all creatures will perish unless they have placed hope in him¹⁵⁶.

With the note that “hope” in Christ is the sole source of salvation¹⁵⁷, Ambrosiaster returns to the theme announced in the *argumentum*. The mention of “treasures and wisdom of knowledge” creates an associative bridge for Ambrosiaster to begin a comparison of the wisdom in Christ – *omnis ... scientiae ratio totius creaturae supernae et terrenae* – with secular studies:

For what could be wiser than Solomon or shrewder than Daniel? To these people, then, God gave wisdom beyond the others, so that he could make himself known as the Author of the whole of wisdom. Indeed, that all wisdom and knowledge is in Christ eludes every unbeliever, since they do not read about astronomy [*astrologiam*] in the gospels, or geometry in the apostle, or arithmetic [*arithmeticam*] or music in the prophet. These things are disdained by our people [*despecta sunt a nostris*] for a reason, namely, because they do not relate to salvation but make people chase all the more after error and lead them away from God, with the result that while they are eager to engage in disputations about these mental productions [*ratiocinationum disputationibus*], they do not take any care for their own souls. What wisdom is all that true, if it has failed to recognize what is beneficial and to disdain what is harmful? Such wisdom is harmful, since it prevents the soul from taking

156. CSEL 81/3, 178.18-28.

157. This is one of the several points on which Ambrosiaster seems to have read and absorbed certain points of Marius Victorinus’ commentaries on Paul. This was first maintained by SOUTER, *Earliest Latin Commentaries* (n. 40), p. 64, and is demonstrated more fully in COOPER, *Marius Victorinus’ Commentary on Galatians* (n. 29), pp. 186-246.

care of itself. Quite rightly, therefore, has the one who has acknowledged Christ found a treasure *of wisdom and knowledge*, for he has acknowledged what is useful [*utile*] to him¹⁵⁸.

This note that advanced secular studies are looked down on by Christians (*despecta sunt a nostris*) because they are useless for salvation suggests Ambrosiaster's concern about the wealthy for whom such studies were identified *tout court* with "wisdom and knowledge" and accordingly held prestige. Such people who get involved with this kind of discourse (*ratiocinationum disputationes*) recall his note in the *argumentum* about the "false apostles" who "ensnared the sincere minds of the Colossians with philosophical discussions"¹⁵⁹. Learning of a certain type can be a problem when it distracts from the practical concern (*quod ei sit utile*) for religious salvation.

Ambrosiaster's mention of astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, and music – what later became known as the quadrivium through Boethius (*Arith.* 1.1)¹⁶⁰ – prepares the way for his polemic against pagan speculation on the "elements" apropos of Paul's warning in 2,4 about people who might "deceive [*circumveniat*] you with the subtlety of their speech". The apostle more fully characterized such people in 2,8 as those who seek to "seduce [*seducat*] you through philosophy and empty deception according to human tradition, according to the elements of this world". A couple samples of Ambrosiaster's comments on these passages bring the object of his polemics into greater relief. Who are these people with the oratorical abilities to deceive the Colossians, whose minds he said in the *argumentum* were characterized as having a certain *simplicitas*? "He is issuing a warning not to let their minds get carried away by the speech of bad men and by their skill in evil, since the wise of the world delight in ensnaring the souls of the unlearned [*simplicium animas*] by a certain skill and by the minutiae of their disputations [*minutiis disputationum*]"'. What is the danger here? "By their argumentation [*ratione*] about worldly things they draw the unlearned away from the hope [*abs spe*] which is in Christ"¹⁶¹. Again, the issue is secular studies as potentially undermining religious hope; and the threat is from the side of the learned who might exert influence upon Christians of the less learned sort.

158. CSEL 81/3, 179.15-27.

159. CSEL 81/3, 167.4-5.

160. See J. MAGEE, *Boethius*, in L. GERSON (ed.), *Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, vol. 2, 788-812, p. 791. In the medieval Latin curriculum, the quadrivium supplemented the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. See H.-I. MARROU, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, transl. G. Lamb, New York, New American Library, 1964, pp. 244-245.

161. CSEL 81/3, 180.10-14.

Similar language recurs in the comments on the following lemma (Col 2,8-9), where Paul warns against deception *per filosofiam ... secundum elementa huius mundi*. Ambrosiaster explains what this deception is:

He is speaking of earthly philosophy [*filosofiam dicit terrenam*], through which those who crave to be judged clever in the world tend to be seduced [*solent seduci*]. This philosophy is composed of arguments and a subtlety about minutiae. It claims to have investigated the natural causes of things [*quasi fysicas investigaverit rationes*]¹⁶², having certain other things mixed in, which would be indicators or examples of a good life. Sometimes this philosophy concerns itself with standards of measure, also numbers, sometimes with the qualities and quantities of the elements. He who falls into its disputations hardly ever escapes from it, for he gets occupied with probable cases and fictitious matters, reckoning nothing is so true as what is perceived and understood in the elements. And since the things which are present and discerned by the eyes seem sweet and delightful, they seduce considerable numbers of people [*aliquantos seducunt*], who in despair about what is to come, claim that spiritual reasoning is to be looked down upon and ridiculed. Tied to their fleshly reasoning, they assign all power to the heavenly bodies. This keeps them from having to accept that heavy bodies can be raised to heaven or that light bodies can fall to the earth, or that any bodily thing could be procreated without a mixing of substances¹⁶³.

This final objection about the physics of bodies was standard fare for philosophical polemics against Christianity, as one can gather from Eusebius' refutation of Sossianus Hierocles' treatise against the Christians¹⁶⁴. Ambrosiaster's reference to such polemics envisions two groups of people: the learned seducers who are themselves seduced by *terrena filosofia*; and those who are impressed by them. Both are dazzled by the various branches of natural philosophy, to the point where Christian beliefs about resurrection and virgin birth appear false and silly. Thus he denounces those who have confidence in the claims of such expert knowledge:

They are fighting against the power and providence of God. For they know that in the ancient, divine tomes of the Hebrews, many things are read to have been done through Moses which human reasoning does not grasp. Likewise,

162. Cf. similar language in *Qu. test.* 97 (CSEL 50, 171.10-11): *Si rationi fides commode-tur, ipsa nominum ratio patris et filii ostenderet unitatem fysico modo.*

163. CSEL 81/3, 181.17-182.1.

164. Eusebius, *Hierocles* 6.2-5 (LCL 458, 166-171), esp. 6.3 (LCL 458, 167): "In the same way the race of mortal men, which partakes both of soul and of body, is circumscribed by divine laws. Someone cannot therefore go bodily through the sky". On Hierocles and his anti-Christian work, see COOK, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (n. 36), pp. 250-276. Porphyry, whose work against Christianity was used by Hierocles, also rejected violations of the natural order (if we can accept that the teaching refuted by Macarius Magnes in his *Apocriticus* 2.2 goes back to Porphyry).

in the new books are also contained many things done by the Lord or through the apostles, things which a fleshly point of view forbids believing¹⁶⁵.

These last two passages quoted expose Ambrosiaster's concern about the impact of philosophical attacks made by learned pagans on Christianity.

Benefits of the Cross and Warnings against Unnecessary Practices (Col 2,13-23)

Ambrosiaster's comments to 2,13-15 contain one of his lengthier revised passages and a long addition; there are also significant expansions in his comments on 2,20 and 2,23. Col 2,13-15 is a difficult and a theologically freighted passage that has been important to the doctrine of the atonement, with its mention of the triumph of Christ over "principalities and powers". Many of his revisions attempt to clarify in even greater precision why Christ's death on the cross results in the release of those whom the devil had in his possession due to the sin of the human race. Other aspects of his revisions highlight dangers associated with gentile religious practices, as much of the language of this section of the epistle suggests a concern with gentile rather than Jewish practices. Col 2,16-17 are exceptional in this regard, with their reference to food and drink, festivals, new moons, and the sabbath. These verses elicit clarification why such practices have lost validity with the coming of Christ. The revised comments are particularly interesting when they pertain less to solving a question implicit in the text than to the polemical targets. This is clearly the case in regard to 2,13-15, where the relatively brief remarks (eight sentences) in the earlier recension present a close paraphrase that expounds the theological meaning of the passage using key phrases of the lemma.

Ambrosiaster, like most modern commentators¹⁶⁶, takes these "principalities and powers" to be spiritual beings, the devil's associates who are conquered by Christ's resurrection and led in triumph on the cross. His treatment of these verses in the first edition of his commentary opens with a brief remark pertaining to the formerly gentile identity of the Colossians:

He recalls God's kindness [*beneficium dei*] to the human race, so that having recalled their gentile origin the Colossians would render thanks [*ut recordati ex gentibus gratias illi referant*] to God as suppliants of his awesome power. For the sake of his own honor, God brought help to those who were not seeking him, in order that they would remain in devotion to him [*in devotione eius*], knowing that they had formerly been without the law of God. That is when

165. CSEL 81/3, 182.1-10.

166. The dominant position is that these are angels, e.g., HEIL, *Colossians* (n. 154), p. 67.

they were in “the foreskin of the flesh” [Col 2,13], a state in which there is no hope; but by the grace of God, they were called through Christ to life, while in baptism God forgave them the sins of an ancient error¹⁶⁷.

Although Ambrosiaster began here with a theologically contextualizing remark aimed at reminding his audience of all humanity’s need for gratitude to God (*dei memorat beneficium quod est circa genus humanum*), the emphasis in this comment is upon the Colossians’ former state due to their previous religious practices (*sine lege dei ... in praepotio carnis ... peccata erroris antiqui*). The ancient error is idolatry, the “primary and very grave offence”, as he put in commenting on 3,5¹⁶⁸.

The remaining comments on these verses in the alpha recension elaborate the soteriological ideas that apply to all who receive the benefit of Christ’s resurrection, when he triumphed over the “principalities and powers” (2,15), who at that moment lost their hitherto legitimate hold on sinful humanity¹⁶⁹. Ambrosiaster’s emphasis in his explanation of the passage is upon the justice of the redemption and of the judgment by which sinners were originally condemned. I translate with some omissions:

With the conquest of the principalities and powers in the death of Christ, God erased the sentence that had been decreed against us for Adam’s sin. Just as the names of those who lead good lives are in a book of life (cf. Ps 69,28; Rev 3,5 *et al.*), so too the names of sinners are in a book of death. Therefore, God erased this verdict by which we were liable to death, just as much for our own as for our ancestral transgressions. Death was conquered in Christ: the devil and his henchmen [*triumfato diabolo et satellitibus eius*] were triumphed over in his flesh. God triumphed over them in the cross of Christ, since Christ was not only an innocent man but also a just one, killed as if he were a sinner. They were found to be unscrupulous and cruel toward a man who had not sinned. Hence it came about that they, having been convicted, did not dare prevent the Savior from leading souls out of the underworld and into the supernal realms. ... The sentence was erased when God resurrected Christ from the dead. For the devil lost hold over man, whom he had laid claim to on the basis of that prior verdict, when he himself was triumphed over and conquered. It was just [*sc.* of God] to pass a judgment on sin; but since man sinned after having been persuaded by the devil’s craftiness, it came about by the providence of God – a just judge – that the devil, having a hold on man who was deceived in an evil manner, stood accused in his exulting. Thus it came about that he had nothing to say by way of objection about the man who had been taken away from him. This is what God accomplished through Christ: that the devil who began to reign

167. CSEL 81/3, 184.19–185.5 (*recens. α*).

168. *Primum enim et pergrave crimen idolatria est*. Cf. Tertullian, *Idol.* 1.1 where he calls idolatry *principale crimen generis humani* (CCSL 2, 1101.3). Ambrosiaster discusses the topic at length in the commentary on Romans; see especially on Rom 6,6-7, where he calls idolatry *gravissimum crimen et caput totius erroris* (CSEL 81/1, 195.15-16).

169. CSEL 81/3, 185.13-19 (*recens. α*).

through a man's sinning would lose his reign, having been openly triumphed over by God in Christ, through him who had not sinned¹⁷⁰.

Ambrosiaster's concern for divine justice is of a piece with the interest in law – Roman law, biblical law, natural law – that scholars have long noted in his works¹⁷¹. In a recent examination of this theme in his *opera*, Hunter has observed how Ambrosiaster was “a Christian thinker whose mind was profoundly shaped by legal terminology and categories. He was confident that the world around him reflected a created order that derived from God and that was accessible to all human beings through the natural law”¹⁷². There is an “order” to salvation history and that order includes the “the devil and his henchmen” who were in no sense cheated by God in the Christ-event.

Ambrosiaster almost completely recast his comments on these verses, although he did not omit but rather refined his atonement theology. The point the revision brings up for closer analysis is what Paul meant in saying that the gentiles were “dead in the transgressions and the foreskin of your flesh”. The revised remarks adduce two points about the Colossians' former deadness. First, they were “dead” in not wanting to receive the testimony to the creator that is the law, which was given to condemn moral faults (*ad vitia condemnanda*). In the second place, their personal sins made them unworthy of life (*inpietatis peccatorum suorum causa indigni errant vita*)¹⁷³. As gentiles, then, the Colossians were at a dead-end: their way of life was offensive to God and to justice, and they had refused the remedy of the law. For this reason gentiles are to be distinguished strongly from Jews, as Ambrosiaster often remarks¹⁷⁴. Here he makes the point by picking up the language of the lemma (2,13) and bringing in a relevant dominical saying:

Whence after mentioning the case of the gentiles, he brings the Jews into discussion too, saying “forgiving us all our faults”, to the effect that after the particular issue he adds the general point, since God has forgiven everybody all their faults. But because – just as the Lord says – “to whom more has been given greater love is required” [Luke 7,43], Paul therefore urges the gentiles to take stock of the reasons for their evils and of how much grace they have received in Christ, so that they would with all their devotion be careful about

170. CSEL 81/3, 185.5–186.22–27 (*recens. α*).

171. Fullest discussion in O. HEGGELBACHER, *Vom römischen zum christlichen Recht: Juristische Elemente in den Schriften des sog. Ambrosiaster*, Freiburg/CH, Universitätsverlag, 1959.

172. D.G. HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster*, in P.L. REYNOLDS (ed.), *Great Christian Jurists and Legal Collections in the First Millennium*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, 252–265, p. 263.

173. CSEL 81/3, 184.19–26 (*recens. γ*).

174. SOUTER, *Earliest Latin Commentaries* (n. 40), pp. 72–75. See also L. SPELLER, *Ambrosiaster and the Jews*, in *Studia Patristica* 17/1 (1982) 72–78.

obedience to Christ, by whom they have been liberated from the opposite punishment of death¹⁷⁵.

Even where Paul brings up his own former Jewishness – “forgiving us...” – Ambrosiaster sees the apostle emphasizing the greatness of the grace given to the gentiles in view of their former idolatrous religion and immoral lives, and the correspondingly greater weight of obligation toward God. With the quotation of Luke 7,43 Ambrosiaster gets back to the point made more briefly in the earlier recension concerning the *beneficium dei* toward the gentiles. Here he expresses it differently, with greater pathos: *qualem gratiam acceperint a deo* – what an amazing grace they have received in Christ. Hence the necessity of the clarification about the gravity of idolatry and the dangers of those whose persuasions lead toward it.

The rest of the revised comment returns to the question of “the inscription which stood against us” (2,14) and Christ’s triumph over the powers (2,15). But before he embarks upon his lengthier addition (a full page in the critical edition), he cautions that the words seem “obscure” and are must be carefully elucidated¹⁷⁶. Clearly Ambrosiaster was not satisfied with his previous comments; indeed his revisions offer some precision, although without changing the substance of the atonement theology. Of particular interest are his revised remarks on the phrase *deleto cirographo, quod adversum nos erat in decretis* (RSV: “having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands”):

The decree [*decretum*] Paul mentions, however, is not the one that pagans call fate [*fatum*], since they claim that decree does not stand against all. By fate, they say, certain people are made happy, other unhappy. The decree Paul is speaking about stood against everyone, for it was a verdict against all people¹⁷⁷.

Ambrosiaster’s deep opposition to astrological fatalism is well known. As Bussièrres has noted, his *Qu. test.* 115, *De fato*, is the earliest surviving anti-fatalist treatise in Latin¹⁷⁸. Its opening line does not understate his concern: *nihil tam contrarium Christiano, quam si arti matheseos adhibeat curam*¹⁷⁹. “Nothing is so contradictory in a Christian than to take an interest in astrology”. The same perspective is evident throughout his commentaries¹⁸⁰, notably in

175. CSEL 81/3, 185.9-26 (*recens. γ*).

176. CSEL 81/3, 186.10-12: *haec, sicut videtur, obscura sunt ac per hoc adhibita cura dilucidanda sunt.*

177. CSEL 81/3, 187.21-26.

178. For discussion of this treatise and the targets of its polemic, see BUSSIÈRES, *Ambrosiaster* (n. 13), pp. 52-96.

179. CSEL 50, 318.5-6.

180. For references and discussion, see DE BRUYN – COOPER – HUNTER, *Ambrosiaster’s Commentary on Romans* (n. 5), pp. C-CII.

Colossians, where the mention of *elementa* in a couple passages, or here with the phrase *in decretis*, gives him the occasion for polemics. Reducing the plural *decretis* to the singular *decretum* to stand for the whole *cirographum* cancelled by Christ, Ambrosiaster creates a closer parallel to *fatum*. The *decretum* mentioned by the apostle is the sentence against original sin, thus it is the same for all and not materially parallel – he points out – to the pagan *fatum* that differentiates between people based on the position of the heavenly bodies at their birth. God’s predestination of believers to salvation does not even come up here as a potential parallel to pagan fate, since he interprets the mention of predestination in Rom 8,29-30 as a matter of divine foreknowledge¹⁸¹.

Ambrosiaster’s treatment of the reference to Jewish observances in Col 2,16-17 (VL: *nemo igitur iudicet vos in cibo vel in potu aut in parte diei festi aut in numeniis aut sabbato*) is also polemical, but his point is similar. Because Christ is sufficient for salvation, one ought not give way to the religious demands of Judaism or paganism. The latter he refers to as *superstitio*, which Ambrosiaster uses as a shorthand for paganism, i.e., polytheism¹⁸²:

Because all hope, indeed all confidence, lies in Christ, the apostle has taught that we ought not subject ourselves to any aspect of superstition or the law. For this reason, people who clamoring for – or muttering about – something not pertaining to the faith of Christ are to be condemned. Christ alone is to be followed, he is the one through whom death has been overcome and the resurrection of the dead brought on. Some Jews tend to be judgmental of the faithful, because they eat items of food forbidden by Moses, although God has made all things clean [cf. Acts 10,15]. Having been judged unworthy to eat these things, let them be prohibited from eating better foods¹⁸³.

By those “better foods”, he presumably means the Eucharist, but one should note that the harsh remark is not made about all Jews but only those who criticize Christian non-observance (*quidam autem Iudaeorum*). Ambrosiaster goes on to treat a second point of Jewish criticism, which rebukes Christians for their non-observance of biblically-based holidays¹⁸⁴:

They tend to rebuke us on another count, since we reject their festival days or because we do not observe the beginning of the months, which they call “new

181. CSEL 81/1, 291.3-5.

182. See his remarks on Col 2,12-22 (CSEL 81/3, 191.10-11), where he refers to *multorum deorum superstitionem*. On the development of the term *superstitio* from an original positive notion in Latin to that of negative, politically threatening religious practices, see D.B. MARTIN, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. 126-139.

183. CSEL 81/3, 188.2-10.

184. The celebration of the new moon (which marks the beginning of the months in the biblical calendar) is commanded in Num 10,10 and 28,11. See the references to ancient

moons". But most of all it is that we do not observe sabbath days, so that these days would be luxuriously spent in leisure and banquets, something that leads to wrongdoing more than to grace. All these things constitute "the body of Christ", since it is by the operations [*effectus*] of the elements that these terms [*vocabula*] exist. This is why he says in the gospel: "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath" [Matt 12,8]¹⁸⁵.

The calculation of the calendar by the movements of the heavenly bodies allows Ambrosiaster to connect – as he did on Gal 4,3¹⁸⁶ – the observance of Jewish holidays with the *elementa* of Col 2,8. His previous discussion of the *elementa* in that verse focused on pagan philosophical discourse rather than calendrically-based observances, but his treatment of Jewish holidays is rather different. He claims that such Jewish observances are theoretically part of the body of Christ (*haec omnia corpus sunt Christi, quia elementorum per effectus sunt vocabula*), a notion that depends on earlier statements in the epistle asserting Christ's headship over all thing created in him (Col 1,16-19). Nonetheless, the observance of such holidays is out of the question for Christians. The quotation of Matt 12,8 reinforces this point, which also appears in Ambrosiaster's *argumentum* to Galatians, where he provides a lapidary reason for Christian non-observance of biblical law: *quia qui deum et dominum legis colit, supra legem est*¹⁸⁷.

Ambrosiaster's attitude toward the calendrically-based observance of pagan festivals by contrast is unequivocally hostile, in that he sees nothing but idolatry there. Cumont¹⁸⁸ pointed to a remarkable passage in *Qu. test.* 84.3 where Ambrosiaster maintains that Satan instituted religious rites – *mysteria* – whereby the priests of Cybele would celebrate the death of Attis during the spring equinox as a kind of diabolical parallel to the Easter celebration of the redemption brought by the blood of Christ¹⁸⁹. A similar concern about Satan initiating worship of the elements surfaces in his remarks on Col 2,11-12¹⁹⁰. But beyond the point that the pagan holidays are dependent on the elements *qua* heavenly bodies that regulate the calendrical celebrations,

rabbinic literature in I. KLEIN, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1979, pp. 256-266.

185. CSEL 81/3, 188.11-18.

186. CSEL 81/3, 43.3-7. See also his comments on Gal 4,10 where he relates the *elementa* to the movement of sun and moon and generative of the seasons and the Roman calendar (CSEL 81/3, 46.2-18).

187. CSEL 81/3, 3.9-10.

188. CUMONT, *La polémique de l'Ambrosiaster* (n. 32), pp. 423-425.

189. CSEL 50, 145.5-18 (the term *superstitio* appears here as a synonym for paganism).

190. CSEL 81/3, 184.5-8: "So these are the things he is urging: that that they persevere in renouncing the pomp and ceremony of Satan, who propagates the worship of the elements in order to turn people away from God, wanting to make them participants in his own apostasy".

Ambrosiaster is very emphatic that the pagans worship the elements themselves. This is what constitutes “their enslavement to the elements”, as he puts it when commenting on Gal 3,20¹⁹¹, a point he also made in the title of *Qu. test.* 82¹⁹². It is this idolatrous relation to the *elementa* that signals the key distinction between Jews and pagans, as Ambrosiaster notes in his concluding remark on Col 2,18-19: “In this passage he is speaking about pagans; above [on 2,16-17] he speaks about the Jews, since they also do service ‘under the elements’ [Gal 4,3], though not serving the elements”¹⁹³. He makes the same point while commenting on Gal 4,3: “Jews were not hoping for anything on the basis of the elements like pagans, but they were venerating God the Creator in creation”¹⁹⁴. The pagan enslavement to the elements, however, is quite different and pertains to humanly invented (and diabolically inspired) religious practices as well as astronomically-based observations about lucky and unlucky days. All such observances are to be condemned as attempts to manage one’s life apart from the creator of those elements¹⁹⁵.

This warning against religious observances continues through the end of the section (2,20-23) terminating the polemical first half of the epistle and leading to the exhortations that make up the bulk of the second half (3,1–4,6), which section Dunn refers to as “the pattern of living that follows from the cross”¹⁹⁶. The phrase in Col 2,20, “with Christ you died to the elements of the world”, gives Ambrosiaster the chance to emphasize the demand for total renunciation of “all the errors of superstitions”. Renouncing these things, Christians die “to the world” in baptism “so as to cultivate faith alone in Christ”¹⁹⁷. Thus he contrasts “the teachings given by God” with the worship of the elements and other errors “which human tradition has invented”¹⁹⁸.

His concluding comment on these verses reveal a concern for what scholars have long identified as the problem of the “half-Christians” in the

191. CSEL 81/3, 39.3-4: *abstulit ergo gentilibus numerum deorum et famulatum elementorum.*

192. CSEL 50, 139.5-9: *Paganos elementis esse subiectos nulli dubium est: quid est ergo quod apostolus dicit: ‘eramus et nos sub elementis huius mundi servientes’. si itaque et Iudaei elementis erant servientes, quid differabant a paganis.*

193. CSEL 81/3, 189.27-29.

194. CSEL 81/3, 43.11-12: *nihil tamen de elementis sperabant Iudaei sicut et pagani, sed creatorem deum venerabantur in creatura.*

195. In his commentaries this point is most fully discussed on Gal 4,10 (see n. 123 *supra*).

196. DUNN, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (n. 125), p. 42.

197. CSEL 81/3, 190.3-5: *omnis qui baptizatur in Christo moritur mundo; cunctis enim superstitionum erroribus abrenuntiat, ut solam colat fidem Christi.*

198. CSEL 81/3, 190.16.

post-Constantinian period¹⁹⁹. As Ambrosiaster puts it, “one who after baptism wavers about certain things, and maintains that some of the old practices are to be honored, shows himself to live by the elements, which he has determined to be worthy of worship or which he doubts are to be condemned”²⁰⁰. The final phrase of this sentence (*aut dubitat contemnenda*) is something Ambrosiaster added when he revised the work, as if to take account of those who might be tempted to think that some practices of paganism – say, astrology – did not have to be utterly rejected. His remarks on 2,21-22 reinforce the contrast between what he presents as the “faith in the one God” and the “superstition of many gods that ‘human error’ has introduced”²⁰¹. The same point recurs in his comments on 2,23, apropos of this verse’s mention of *ratio sapientiae* and *simulatione religionis*: “they apply the name of religion to human tradition, so that it would be called religion although it is sacrilege – for what is opposed to the creator [*auctorem*] has been invented by a sacrilegious mind”. Ambrosiaster then sketches the rationale (the *ratio sapientiae* mentioned in the lemma) of those who would justify astrological observations on the grounds that since “all bodily birth” is based on the elements (*ex elementis*), it is “not unfitting – they claim – to be inclined toward the things by whose directions the human race is regulated”²⁰². The result of such counsel is that one subjects oneself to the “brightest objects in the world” (*clarissima mundi*) and neglects the creator²⁰³.

IV. CONCLUSION

Ambrosiaster’s commentary on Colossians is notable for its pronounced polemics against all aspects of non-Christian worship, particularly those of paganism that are directly work – as he repeatedly states – to the detriment of the worship owed the creator. To a great extent this focus derives from the language of the epistolary text itself, with its warning against the teaching of unspecified opponents that is correlated with practices grounded in

199. C. GUIGNEBERT, *Les demi-Chrétiens est leur place dans l’Église antique*, in *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 63 (1923) 65-102.

200. CSEL 81/3, 190.22-25: *qui autem post baptismum ambiget de aliquibus putans quaedam de veteribus veneranda, vivere se ostendit elementis, quae decernit colenda aut dubitat contemnenda*.

201. CSEL 81/3, 191.9-11.

202. CSEL 81/3, 192.1-5: *rationem enim videtur habere sapientiae iuxta carnem, quia ex elementis est omnis corporalis nativitas; ac per hoc non esse incongruum, inquiunt, his inclinari, quorum gubernaculis humanum regitur genus*.

203. CSEL 81/3, 192.5-7.

the *elementa huius mundi* (Col 2,8 and 2,20). In commenting on these verses, as we have seen, Ambrosiaster distinguishes and connects a discourse about the elements (2,8: *filosofiam ... secundum elementa huius mundi*) from practices based on the discernment of the role played by the elements in earthly life (2,20-23). Such discourse is pernicious in providing a rationale for the resumption of practices that had been customary for former pagans to have recourse to as potential sources of help and hope.

By comparison with the many threads of polemics against these *rationes elementorum*, as he expressed this complex in his preface on Colossians, his concern with Judaism and Jewish practices is relatively minor in his commentary on this epistle. By contrast, Ambrosiaster's other commentaries – chiefly those on Romans and Galatians, for the obvious reason of the content of those letters – have a more sustained focus on Judaism and Jewish practices, one marked by polemics and apologetics, based on his notion of the gospel as *abbreviatio legis*. This latter aspect of Ambrosiaster's exposition of the Pauline letters, however, is not necessarily reflective of a context in which Judaism was an actual competitor²⁰⁴. Quite otherwise is the case of his anti-pagan polemics. Ambrosiaster was active in the decades following the death of Julian and the re-ascension of Christian emperors; and while much of his anti-pagan polemics was drawn from literary sources, the historical context at Rome was one in which public sacrifices were on the wane, but there was some resistance to increasing imperial measures to marginalize traditional religious practices of paganism²⁰⁵. This resistance, as Courcelle pointed out, drew on the resources of learned pagans, who in the pre-Constantinian period – Porphyry, Hierocles – and subsequently under Julian developed lines of anti-Christian argumentation based at least in part on their hostile reading of the Bible.

Ambrosiaster displays an explicit concern in his commentary on Colossians that this learned pagan discourse could lead Christians astray. This polemical thread, we can conclude, seems less about those outside the church than about Christians with lingering attachments to former practices, particularly those that did not seem overtly idolatrous, like astrology. His insistence that such things are not *adiaphora* follows a line of theological thinking that flowed from the absolutism of the apostle Paul – “You cannot drink the cup

204. See DI SANTO, *L'apologetica* (n. 38), pp. 173-192, who concludes that Ambrosiaster's anti-Jewish polemics are more about the construction of a Christianity identity that maintains an equal distance between the poles of paganism and Judaism (or Judaizing in a Christian context).

205. For recent critical discussion, see A. CAMERON, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, esp. ch. 2, “From Constantius to Theodosius”.

of the Lord and the cup of demons” (1 Cor 10,21) – to the general perception of patristic writers who saw Christianity and paganism as antithetical in principle and practice. The presence of Christians in the church of Ambrosiaster’s day who did not share this rigorism – his strict either-or perspective – was one of the main problems he sought to address in his work on Paul. The choice of the *corpus Paulinum* as the exegetical object par excellence among Latin exegetes of the late fourth and early fifth century, as I have argued elsewhere²⁰⁶, was likely determined by the fact that commentaries on the Pauline epistles, which feature the apostle’s regular attention to normative doctrine and practice, could easily be a compendium of Christianity accessible to Christians of even moderate learning. These were the kind of Christians that the polemical passages in Ambrosiaster’s commentary on Colossians and other epistles appear designed to educate, in the face of pagan adversaries whose arguments still had to be reckoned with, even if the pagan party no longer had the power of legal coercion on its side.

In this light, Ambrosiaster’s general aims in his works on Paul are readily explicable. His focus on the reconstruction of the situation behind the Pauline epistles was part of this methodology, an approach initiated by the author of the *Vetus Latina* prologues. The strategies he employed to reach his contemporary audience involve the choice of a method designed to relate the apostle Paul’s authoritative teachings to the situation of a church now largely composed of believers from the gentiles, a situation in which pagan practices were more of a live threat than any aspects of Judaism. To Ambrosiaster, it was of great importance that believers understand how their faith and its practice was related both positively and negatively to its roots in the religious traditions of Israel. But above all he wanted his audience to grasp how Christianity, as a species of biblical monotheism, demanded distance from other religious traditions of the Roman world and accordingly from those who employed the secular sciences to attack the church and its demands for exclusive religious loyalty.

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206. COOPER, *Marius Victorinus’ Commentary on Galatians* (n. 29), pp. 6-12, 244-246.

WISSENSCHAFTLICHE EXEGESE IN DEN PROLOGEN DER KOMMENTARE DES HIERONYMUS ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT

I. DER WISSENSCHAFTLICHE CHARAKTER DER BIBEL AUSLEGUNG IN DER SPÄTANTIKE

Die Kommentierung von Texten, wie sie in der Spätantike sowohl von paganen Philosophen als auch von christlichen Exegeten betrieben wurde, erfolgte nach bestimmten Standards, die ihren Sitz im Leben in der Schulphilosophie der Römischen Kaiserzeit hatten. Diese Standards haben sich insbesondere in den Vorworten zu den philosophischen und biblischen Kommentaren niedergeschlagen, die in diesem Kontext entstanden sind. Ehe der Lehrer einen Text zusammen mit seinen Schülern las und sukzessive erklärte, wurde eine Reihe von Vorfragen zur Methodologie der Auslegung und zu übergreifenden Aspekten des Textes besprochen. Aus dieser Praxis entwickelte sich ein Set von Themen, die routinemäßig in den Vorworten erörtert wurden¹.

Zu den topischen Fragen, die in solchen Prolegomena besprochen wurden, gehörten einerseits solche, die den Text betrafen, etwa ein Überblick über seinen Inhalt und Gedankengang oder die Relevanz des darin behandelten Gegenstands, andererseits solche, die den Autor betrafen, zum Beispiel seine Motivation zum Abfassen des Kommentars, die Betonung seiner Mühe und Einsatzbereitschaft, regelmäßig verbunden mit der – in keinem Fall ernst zu

1. Siehe K. PRAECHTER, *Die griechischen Aristoteleskommentare*, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 18 (1909) 516-538; M. PLEZIA, *De commentariis isagogicis* (Archiwum filologiczne, 23), Krakau, Nakladem Polskiej Akad. Umiejtności, 1949; I. HADOT, *Les introductions aux commentaires exégétiques chez les auteurs néoplatoniciens et les auteurs chrétiens*, in M. TARDIEU (Hg.), *Les règles de l'interprétation*, Paris, Cerf, 1987, 99-122; J. MANSFELD, *Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled before the Study of an Author or a Text* (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 61), Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln, Brill, 1994; ID., *Prolegomena Mathematica: From Apollonius of Perga to Late Neoplatonism* (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 80), Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln, Brill, 1998; M. SKEB, *Exegese und Lebensform: Die Proömien der antiken griechischen Bibelkommentare* (*Clavis Commentariorum Antiquitatis et Medii Aevi*, 5), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2007, S. 68-127.

nehmenden – Betonung seiner Unfähigkeit, diese wiederum verbunden mit einer Bitte um Unterstützung und der Anrufung einer Gottheit. Auch die grundsätzliche Auffassung des Autors von seinem Gegenstand, die Art seiner Präsentation und die Auseinandersetzung mit Vorgängern und Gegnern konnte dazu gehören. Von der hohen Kaiserzeit an sind einzelne Komponenten aus diesem Themenset belegt, erstmals bei Galen in seinen Kommentaren zum hippokratischen Schrifttum in den 170/80er Jahren des 2. Jhs und in den um 200 verfassten Vorreden zu den Aristoteleskommentaren des Alexander von Aphrodisias². Im Zusammenhang mit der Einführung in das Studium der Werke des Aristoteles mit Hilfe der *Isagoge* des Porphyrius wurden diese Prolegomena offenbar zunehmend in ein Schema gebracht, das allerdings erst am Ende dieser spätantiken Kommentartradition zu greifen ist. In den ersten Jahrzehnten des 6. Jhs führte der alexandrinische Philosophieprofessor Ammonios in seinem Kommentar zur *Isagoge* des Porphyrius folgende sieben Punkte als „Prolegomena bzw. vorausgehende technische Bemerkungen zu jedem Buch“ an: das Ziel des Werkes (Skopos), sein Wert bzw. Nutzen, die Echtheitsfrage, seine Position in der Reihenfolge der Schullektüre, die Erklärung des Titels, die Kapiteileinteilung und die Frage, zu welchem Teil der Philosophie die Schrift gehört³. Dieses vermutlich im 5. Jh. entstandene Schema ist bei etlichen spätantiken Kommentatoren anzutreffen: bei dem Ammoniosschüler Olympiodoros, bei dessen Schülern Elias und David, die als weiteren Punkt die Lehrmethode hinzufügten, ferner bei Johannes Philoponos, bei Simplicios und bei den Lateinern Chalcidius und Boethius⁴.

Der erste christliche Autor, der diese literarischen Gepflogenheiten aufgriff, war Origenes von Alexandria⁵. In den Vorworten zu seinen Bibelkommentaren behandelte er die genannten Einleitungsfragen, ehe er mit der kleinteiligen Exegese des biblischen Textes Vers für Vers bzw. Wort

2. Galen, *De fracturis* (18/2, 318-322 KÜHN); *De articulis* (18/1, 300-304 KÜHN); *in librum I Epidemiarum* (CMG V 10/1, 3-10); *in librum VI Epidemiarum* (CMG V 10/2.2, 3-5); *De natura hominis* (CMG V 9/2, 3-8); *De salubri diaeta* (CMG V 9/1, 89); *De officina medici* (18/2, 629-632 KÜHN); Alexander von Aphrodisias, *in Aristot. Anal. prior.* (1-9 WALLIES); *in Aristot. Meteor.* (1-4 HAYDUCK); *in Aristot. Sens.* (1-2 WENDLAND).

3. Ammonios, *in Porph. Isag.* (21 BUSSE).

4. Olympiodoros, *proleg.* (12-25 BUSSE); *in Aristot. Meteor.* (1-6 STÜVE); Elias, *in Porph. Isag.* (35-39 BUSSE); David, *in Porph. Isag.* (80-94 BUSSE); *in Aristot. Categ.* (127-134 BUSSE); Johannes Philoponos, *in Aristot. Categ.* (7-13 BUSSE); *in Aristot. Analyt. prior.* (1-9 WALLIES); Simplicios, *in Aristot. Categ.* (8-20 KALBFLEISCH); *in Aristot. Physic.* (9 DIELS); *in Aristot. Cael.* (1-6 HEIBERG); Chalcidius, *in Plat. Tim.* 4.58-59; Boethius, *in Porph. Isag. editio prima* 1.1 (4-5 SCHEPSS – BRANDT); *in Aristot. Categ. editio prima* (PL 64, 159-162).

5. Siehe A. FÜRST, *Origen: Exegesis and Philosophy in Early Christian Alexandria*, in J. LÖSSL – J.W. WATT (Hgg.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, Farnham – Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2011, 13-32, S. 16-25.

für Wort begann. Da die meisten seiner Kommentare verloren sind, können wir sein Verfahren lediglich an zwei ausführlichen Beispielen studieren: auf Griechisch im langen Vorwort zum ersten Buch seines Johanneskommentars und in den kürzeren Vorworten zu den einzelnen Büchern (soweit sie erhalten sind)⁶, auf Lateinisch im ebenfalls langen Vorwort zum Hoheliedkommentar (dazu kann man das von Rufinus von Aquileja stark gekürzte Vorwort des Römerbriefkommentars nehmen)⁷. Entgegen einer Annahme der früheren Forschung⁸ folgte er keinem festen Schema, sondern besprach aus dem Set von Prolegomena diejenigen, die für den jeweiligen Text zu diskutieren waren⁹, so zum Hohelied das Hauptthema (*causa praecipua*), seine Position unter den salomonischen Büchern (*ordo*) und seinen Titel (*attitulatio*)¹⁰. Im Vorwort zum Johanneskommentar erörterte er unter anderem die Gattung „Evangelium“¹¹ und fragte nach der Aufgabe bzw. Zielsetzung des Evangelisten¹². Mit diesem Vorgehen schuf Origenes die nach den Standards seiner Zeit wissenschaftliche Form der Bibelauslegung, die sich danach in der altkirchlichen Exegese weithin etablierte¹³.

Einer, wenn nicht der wichtigste seiner spätantiken Epigonen war Hieronymus. Es ist hinlänglich bekannt, wie stark gerade der frühe Hieronymus von der origeneischen Bibelauslegung abhängig war¹⁴. Er pflegte sich zwar mit einer ganze Reihe von illustren Lehrern zu schmücken, darunter Apollinaris von Laodizea und Didymus von Alexandria¹⁵. Doch in seiner exegetischen Praxis ist seine Abhängigkeit von Origenes, sei es direkt oder vermittelt

6. Origenes, *Clo* I,1,1–15,89. Ferner *Clo* IV,1-2 (= *Philoc.* 4); V,1-8 (= *Philoc.* 5); VI,1,1–2,12; XIII,1,1-2; XX,1,1; XXVIII,1,1-6; XXXII,1,1-4.

7. *CCt* prol. 1-4; *CRm* I,1-2.

8. Siehe C. SCHÄUBLIN, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der antiochenischen Exegese* (Theophania, 23), Köln – Bonn, Peter Hanstein, 1974, S. 66-72; B. NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe* (Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, 18/1-2), Basel, Reinhardt, 1987, S. 57-84; HADOT, *Introductions* (Anm. 1), S. 111-119; MANSFELD, *Prolegomena* (Anm. 1), S. 7-8, 10-19; R.E. HEINE, *The Introduction to Origen's Commentary on John Compared with the Introductions to the Ancient Philosophical Commentaries on Aristotle*, in G. DORIVAL – A. LE BOULLUEC (Hgg.), *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible / Origen and the Bible* (BETL, 118), Leuven, Leuven University Press – Peeters, 1995, 3-12.

9. Nachgewiesen von SKEB, *Bibelkommentare* (Anm. 1), S. 14-68, 137-278.

10. Origenes, *CCt* prol. 1,8.

11. *Clo* I,5,27-31; I,15,88.

12. *Clo* I,3,18.

13. Siehe die Sammlung der diesbezüglichen Zeugnisse bei SKEB, *Bibelkommentare* (Anm. 1), S. 279-371.

14. Siehe die bei A. FÜRST, *Hieronymus: Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike*, Freiburg i.Br. – Basel – Wien, Herder, 2016, S. 418-419, zusammengestellte Literatur.

15. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 84,3; 119,4-5; *Apol. adv. Rufin.* I,13; II,16. Siehe dazu P. JAY, *Jérôme auditeur d'Apollinaire de Laodicée à Antioche*, in *REAug* 20 (1974) 36-41; FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 165, 184-185.

durch Eusebius von Caesarea, nicht zu übersehen. Das gilt nicht nur auf dem Hauptgebiet seiner exegetischen Tätigkeit, nämlich der Erklärung des Alten Testaments und darin insbesondere der Propheten – Hieronymus ist der einzige lateinische Kirchenvater, der Kommentare zu sämtlichen Büchern der Propheten geschrieben hat –, sondern auch für seine Exegese des Neuen Testaments. Auf dieses hat Hieronymus allerdings wesentlich weniger Zeit und Energie verwendet. Wir haben von ihm nur Kommentare zu vier Paulusbriefen, die er zu den Briefen an Philemon, an die Galater, an die Epheser und an Titus in rascher Folge im Sommer und frühen Herbst des Jahres 386 in Bethlehem in der aufgeführten Reihenfolge schrieb¹⁶, und einen knapp gehaltenen Kommentar zum Matthäusevangelium, den er nach eigener Auskunft in der Fastenzeit des Jahres 398 binnen zweier Wochen in größter Eile diktierte¹⁷. Insbesondere in den Paulinenkommentaren ist er so stark von Origenes abhängig – was man schon lange gesehen hat –, dass sie über weite Strecken eher Übersetzungen als eigene Werke darstellen. Dies gilt besonders für den Kommentar zum Epheserbrief, wo sich die überaus große Nähe zu Origenes anhand der erhaltenen griechischen Katenenfragmente nachweisen lässt¹⁸. Im Kommentar zum Galaterbrief lässt sich dies für manche Passagen ebenfalls belegen¹⁹, und für die Kommentare zum Philemon- und zum Titusbrief darf man dasselbe annehmen²⁰. In seinen Anfangsjahren vor den origenistischen Streitigkeiten, die 393 in Palästina

16. Literatur dazu bei FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 390-392. Für die Datierung siehe P. NAUTIN, *La date des commentaires de Jérôme sur les épîtres pauliniennes*, in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 74 (1979) 5-12.

17. Literatur bei FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 395.

18. Siehe F. DENIAU, *Le Commentaire de Jérôme sur Ephésiens nous permet-il connaître celui d'Origène?*, in H. CROUZEL – G. LOMIENTO – J. RIUS-CAMPS (Hgg.), *Origeniana: Premier colloque international des études origéniennes, Montserrat, 18-21 septembre 1973* (Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum, 12), Bari, Università di Bari, 1975, 163-179; R.E. HEINE, *Recovering Origen's Commentary on Ephesians from Jerome*, in *JTS NS* 51 (2000) 489-514; R.A. LAYTON, *Recovering Origen's Pauline Exegesis: Exegesis and Eschatology in the Commentary on Ephesians*, in *J ECS* 8 (2000) 273-411; R.E. HEINE, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

19. Siehe A. SOUTER, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul: A Study*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1927; ²1999, S. 110-124; M.A. SCHATKIN, *The Influence of Origen upon Saint Jerome's Commentary on Galatians*, in *VigChr* 24 (1970) 49-58; G. RASPANTI, *Adgrediar opus intemptatum: L'Ad Galatas di Girolamo e gli sviluppi del commentario biblico latino*, in *Adamantius* 10 (2004) 194-216, S. 199-207.

20. Siehe A. VON HARNACK, *Origenistisches Gut von kirchengeschichtlicher Bedeutung in den Kommentaren des Hieronymus zum Philemon-, Galater-, Epheser- und Titusbrief*, in ID., *Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag der exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes II* (Texte und Untersuchungen, 42/4), Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1919, 141-168; R.E. HEINE, *In Search of Origen's Commentary on Philemon*, in *HTR* 93 (2000) 117-133; F. BUCCHI, *Il commento alla lettera a Tito di Girolamo*, in *Adamantius* 8 (2002) 57-82.

ausbrachen, hielt sich Hieronymus weitgehend an Origenes, wie man beispielsweise auch an dem im Jahre 389 entstandenen Koheletkommentar sehen kann²¹. Doch auch noch in dem 398 mitten in den origenistischen Wirren verfassten Matthäuskommentar rekurrierte er auf Origenes und verschwieg dies auch nicht (mehr dazu s.u.).

Vor diesem Hintergrund kann man fragen, ob und inwiefern die wissenschaftlichen Züge der Kommentare des Origenes, wie sie in den Proömien festzustellen sind, in den Kommentaren des Hieronymus zum Neuen Testament ebenfalls anzutreffen sind und ob, wie Caroline Bammel gefragt hat, in diesem Sinne „die Pauluskommentare des Hieronymus die ersten wissenschaftlichen lateinischen Bibelkommentare“ seien²². Angesichts der hochgradigen Abhängigkeit des Hieronymus von Origenes gerade in diesen Kommentaren wird man davon ausgehen müssen, dass es sich so verhält. Gesteuert von dem Interesse herauszufinden, was direkt auf Origenes zurückgehen und ihm daher zugeschrieben werden könnte, hat Ronald Heine die Vorworte zu den drei Büchern des besonders stark von Origenes abhängigen Epheserbriefkommentars auf solche Prologtopik untersucht und ist zu dem Ergebnis gekommen, dass man ziemlich sicher annehmen könne, dass die Hauptmasse des Materials in diesen Proömien von Origenes stammt²³. Eine solche Untersuchung kann man auf die Vorworte zu allen Paulinenkommentaren ausweiten (und dabei dasjenige zum Matthäuskommentar miteinbeziehen). Dies will ich im vorliegenden Beitrag tun, dabei aber die Perspektive wechseln. Es geht mir im Folgenden nicht in erster Linie darum, die Abhängigkeit von Origenes nachzuweisen und ihren jeweiligen Grad zu eruieren, wiewohl auch dies zur Sprache kommen wird. Mein Ziel ist es vielmehr, nach dem wissenschaftlichen Charakter der Exegese des

21. Siehe S. LEANZA, *Sulle fonti del Commentario all'Ecclesiaste di Girolamo*, in *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 3 (1986) 173-199; A. FÜRST, *Der Anthropokosmismus des Origenes im Koheletkommentar des Hieronymus*, in E. BIRNBAUM – L. SCHWIENHORST-SCHÖNBERGER (Hgg.), *Hieronymus als Exeget und Theologe: Interdisziplinäre Zugänge zum Koheletkommentar des Hieronymus* (BETL, 268), Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA, Peeters, 2014, 43-86.

22. C.P. BAMMEL, *Die Pauluskommentare des Hieronymus: Die ersten wissenschaftlichen lateinischen Bibelkommentare?*, *Cristianesimo Latino e cultura Greca sino al sec. IV: XXI Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiani. Roma, 7-9 maggio 1992* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 42), Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1993, 187-207.

23. R.E. HEINE, *The Prologues of Origen's Pauline Commentaries and the Schemata Isagogica of Ancient Commentary Literature*, in *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001) 421-439; ID., *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome* (Anm. 18), S. 22-35 mit dem Fazit S. 35: „It is a rather safe assumption that the bulk of the material in the prologues comes from Origen“. Für die Prologtopik in anderen spätantiken lateinischen Pauluskomentaren siehe S. LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Prologue Topics and Translation Problems in Latin Commentaries on Paul*, in LÖSSL – WATT (Hgg.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (Anm. 5), 33-47, S. 35-42.

Hieronymus zu fragen, wie sie in den Vorworten zu seinen neutestamentlichen Kommentaren im Blick auf die oben dargelegte Topik der Prolegomena zum Ausdruck kommt. Diese Analyse wird zudem für Hieronymus charakteristische Eigenheiten ans Licht bringen, durch die sich seine Kommentarpologe bei aller Abhängigkeit doch auch von denjenigen des Origenes unterscheiden.

II. PROLOGTOPIK IN DEN NEUTESTAMENTLICHEN KOMMENTAREN DES HIERONYMUS

In den Proömien zu seinen neutestamentlichen Kommentaren, besonders in denen zu den paulinischen Briefen, hat Hieronymus viele der Fragen erörtert, die zum Set der Prolegomena gehörten²⁴. Die von ihm angesprochenen und teils ausführlich erörterten Themen betreffen sowohl übergeordnete Aspekte des auszulegenden Textes als auch persönliche Bemerkungen zum Autor. Manches davon stammt von Hieronymus, doch lässt sich vieles auch mit relativ großer Sicherheit auf Origenes zurückführen, auch wenn eine direkte Parallelisierung nicht möglich ist, weil keine entsprechenden griechischen Vergleichstexte erhalten sind.

Im Blick auf die Gattung des auszulegenden Textes (mehr dazu s.u.) erörterte Hieronymus bei den Briefen an Philemon und an Titus die Frage ihrer *Echtheit*, weil die Autorschaft des Paulus bei diesen beiden Briefen aus verschiedenen Gründen in Frage gestellt wurde. Zu Beginn des Vorworts zum Philemonbriefkommentar ging Hieronymus ausführlich auf die Frage ein, ob der Philemonbrief zu den Paulusbriefen zu zählen sei. Das wurde, wie Hieronymus erläutert, kontrovers diskutiert, weil der Inhalt dieses Briefes nicht davon zeuge, dass Paulus darin als Apostel und erfüllt vom Geist Christi spreche; entweder also sei der Brief nicht von Paulus, oder er enthalte,

24. Der Matthäuskommentar wird zitiert nach der Ausgabe von É. BONNARD, *Commentaire sur St. Matthieu* (SC, 242.259), Paris, Cerf, 1977.1979, in der die Edition von D. HURST – M. ADRIAEN, *Commentariorum in Matheum libri IV* (CCSL, 77), Turnhout, Brepols, 1969, abgedruckt ist (praef.: S. 60-70). Für den Kommentar zum Galaterbrief siehe die Edition von G. RASPANTI, *Commentarii in epistulam Pauli apostoli ad Galatas* (CCSL, 77A), Turnhout, Brepols, 2006 (praef.: S. 5-9; II, praef.: S. 78-83; III, praef.: S. 157-160), für diejenigen zum Titus- und zum Philemonbrief diejenige von F. BUCCHI, *Commentarii in epistulas Pauli apostoli ad Titum et ad Philemonem* (CCSL, 77C), Turnhout, Brepols, 2003 (*Tit.* praef.: S. 3-4; *Philem.* praef.: S. 77-80). Für den Kommentar zum Epheserbrief hat mir F. PIERI im Jahr 2009 seine ungedruckte Dissertation zukommen lassen: *L'esegesi di Girolamo nel Commentario a Efesini: Aspetti storico-esegetici e storico-dottrinali. Testo critico e annotazioni*, Tesi Università degli Studi di Bologna 1996/97 (praef.: S. 7-11; II, praef.: S. 53; III, praef.: S. 103-105). Die im Folgenden gegebenen Zitate entstammen diesen Ausgaben, auf die ich jeweils nur mit Angabe der Seitenzahlen verweise.

falls Paulus doch der Autor sei, nichts Erbauliches. Außerdem gebe Paulus darin nur eine Empfehlung ab und lehre nicht²⁵. Die ganze Debatte und die Argumente, die Hieronymus gegen die Infragestellung der Echtheit des Philemonbriefes anführte – zum Beispiel seine Akzeptanz in allen Gemeinden auf dem ganzen Erdkreis²⁶ –, gehen zumindest in Teilen ziemlich sicher auf Origenes zurück. Von diesem nämlich stammt die These, dass nur auf Christus der Geist Gottes laut Joh 1,33 herabgekommen *und geblieben* sei²⁷, weshalb auch bei Paulus wie bei sämtlichen Propheten nicht davon auszugehen sei, dass der Geist Gottes immer auf ihm ruhte²⁸. Auch der Hinweis auf Valentinus, Markion und Apelles würde zu Origenes passen, doch ist hierbei, wie unten zu zeigen sein wird, auch die Hand des Hieronymus sichtbar²⁹. Dieselbe für Origenes typische Front ist im Vorwort zum Titusbriefkommentar greifbar, in dem Hieronymus gegen Markion, Basilides „und alle Häretiker“ den Titusbrief – und desgleichen die beiden Briefe an Timotheus und den an die Hebräer – als paulinisch verteidigt und dafür Tatian an seiner Seite weiß³⁰.

Den Topos der im Text auftretenden *Personen*, der in philosophischen Kommentaren zu Platons Dialogen und von Origenes im Vorwort zum

25. Hieronymus, in *Philem.*, praef. (77-78): *Qui nolunt inter epistulas Pauli eam recipere quae ad Philemonem scribitur, aiunt non semper Apostolum, nec omnia Christo in se loquente dixisse His et ceteris istiusmodi uolunt aut epistulam non esse Pauli, quae ad Philemonem scribitur, aut, si etiam Pauli sit, nihil habere quod aedificare nos possit; et a plerisque ueteribus repudiatam, dum commendandi tantum scribatur officio, non docendi.*

26. In *Philem.*, praef. (78): *At e contrario qui germanae auctoritatis eam esse defendunt, dicunt numquam in toto orbe a cunctis ecclesiis fuisse susceptam, nisi Pauli apostoli crederetur....*

27. Vgl. Origenes, *HNm* VI,3; *HI*s III,2; *CI*o II,11,84-85. Siehe dazu A. FÜRST – C. HENGSTERMANN, *Origenes Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung* 10, Berlin – New York, De Gruyter; Freiburg i.Br. – Basel – Wien, Herder, 2009, S. 43-45.

28. Hieronymus, in *Philem.*, praef. (78): *...post expletum uaticinium rursum in semet reuertens, homo communis fieret e propheta et, excepto Domino nostro Iesu Christo, in nullo Sanctum Spiritum permansisse. Quod signum et baptista Iohannes acceperat ut, super quem uidisset Spiritum Sanctum descendentem et manentem in eo, ipsum esse cognosceret (vgl. Joh 1,33). Ex quo ostendi super multos quidem descendere Spiritum Sanctum, sed proprie hoc esse Saluatoris insigne, quia permaneat in eo.*

29. In *Philem.*, praef. (79): *Quod si non putant eorum esse parua quorum et magna sunt, alterum mihi conditorem, iuxta Valentinum, Marcionem et Apellen, formicae, uermium, culicum, locustarum, alterum caeli, terrae, maris et angelorum debent introducere.* Für Origenes siehe unten Anm. 79 und 80.

30. In *Tit.*, praef. (3): *...non sint digni fide qui fidem primam irritam fecerunt, Marcionem loquor et Basilidem et omnes haereticos qui uetus lantiam Testamentum Vt enim de ceteris epistulis taceam, de quibus quidquid contrarium suo dogmati uiderant eraserunt, nonnullas integras repudiandas crediderunt: ad Timotheum uidelicet utramque et ad Hebraeos et ad Titum quam nunc conamur exponere. ... Sed Tatianus, Encratitarum patriarches, qui et ipse nonnullas Pauli epistulas repudiavit, hanc uel maxime, hoc est ad Titum, Apostoli pronuntiamandam credidit, paruipendens Marcionis et aliorum qui cum eo in hac parte consentiunt adsertionem.*

Hoheliedkommentar erörtert wurde³¹, brachte Hieronymus zur Sprache, indem er nach den Adressaten der Briefe fragte. So sei der Galaterbrief an Heidenchristen adressiert³², eben die Galater, die Hieronymus im Vorwort zum zweiten Buch seines Kommentars ausführlich ethnographisch beschreibt. Da er sich für seine Informationen auf lateinische Autoren wie Varro, Laktanz und Hilarius bezieht (und auch Vergil zitiert) und viel über Gebiete im westlichen Mittelmeerraum redet³³, stammen diese Ausführungen von Hieronymus selbst, worauf auch die Bemerkung am Schluss zur grundsätzlich lateinischen Sprache der Galater hindeutet³⁴. Gleich mehrere Topoi bieten hierzu die Vorworte zum Epheserbriefkommentar. Hieronymus konstatiert vorweg als Aufgabe des Auslegers, die charakteristischen Eigenheiten der im Text auftretenden Personen oder Gruppen zu beschreiben, im Alten Testament beispielsweise die darin genannten Völker, im Neuen Testament die Adressaten der Briefe des Paulus³⁵. Um dieser Aufgabe nachzukommen, geht er ausführlich auf die Stadt ein, in die der Epheserbrief geschickt wurde, nämlich in „die Metropole von Asien“³⁶, und gibt eine Etymologie des Namens „Ephesus“ – er bedeute „Wille“, „Ratschluss“ oder „Seele“ –, die Origenes angesichts seiner Vorliebe für Etymologien vielleicht auch erörtert hat, die Hieronymus jedoch in einer lateinischen und also von ihm stammenden Variante präsentiert³⁷. Im Blick auf die Adressaten, die „Epheser“³⁸, kommt Hieronymus zugleich auf Anlass und

31. Vgl. Origenes, *Ct frg.* in *philoc.* VII,1; *CCt* prol. 1,1-3.

32. Hieronymus, in *Gal.*, praef. (8): *Sed ad Galatas hoc proprium habet quod non scribit ad eos qui ex Iudaeis in Christum crediderant... sed ad eos qui ex gentibus fidem Euangelii receperant...*

33. Vgl. in *Gal.* II, praef. (78-80). Siehe dazu A. CAIN, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius in Jerome's Commentary on Galatians*, in *REAug* 55 (2009) 23-51. Zu diesen Autoren im Vorwort zum Epheserbriefkommentar siehe unten Anm. 92.

34. In *Gal.* II, praef. (83): *Galatas excepto sermone graeco, quo omnis Oriens loquitur, propriam linguam eandem paene habere quam Treuiros; nec referre si aliqua exinde corruerint, cum ... ipsa Latinitas et regionibus cotidie mutetur et tempore.*

35. In *Eph.*, praef. (8): *...quid habeant in ueteri lege proprium Idumaei, Moabitae, Ammonitae, Tyrii, Philistii, Aegyptii et Assyrii; quid rursus in nouo testamento Romani, Corinthii, Galatae, Philippenses, Thessalonicenses, Hebraei, Colossenses et quam nunc ad Ephesos epistolam habemus in manibus.*

36. In *Eph.*, praef. (9): *Scribebat autem ad metropolim Asiae ciuitatem...*; In *Eph.* III, praef. (104): *...principem Asiae ciuitatem...*

37. In *Eph.* III, praef. (103): *Ephesus in latinam linguam interpretatur ‚uoluntas‘ siue ‚consilium meum in ea‘, uel certe ‚anima mea in ea‘.* Im Folgenden, *ibid.* (103-104), erläutert er ausführlich die Bedeutung dieser Etymologien. Die Bedeutungen, die er in seinem etymologischen Lexikon *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum* (ed. P. DE LAGARDE [CCSL, 72], Turnhout, Brepols, 1959, S. 57-161) für den Namen „Efesus“ (auch „Efesum“ und „Efeso“) gab, decken sich hiermit: *int. hebr. nom.* (CCSL 72, 68.28; 75.19; 78.20; 79.9; 80.17).

38. In *Eph.*, praef. (10): *Qui sint autem Ephesii...*

Inhalt des Briefes zu sprechen (mehr darüber s.u.): Indem er die Epheser als „Verehrer der Diana“, der vielbrüstigen Stadtgöttin von Ephesus, apostrophiert, spielt er auf die auch explizit so genannte heidnische „Idolatrie“ in Ephesus an, die Paulus aus eigener Erfahrung, da er sich laut Apg 20,31 drei Jahre lang in der Stadt aufgehalten habe, gut kenne, weshalb die Epheser in diesem Zusammenhang eine „Ermahnung des Apostels“ nötig gehabt hätten³⁹. Zugleich macht Hieronymus damit eine Bemerkung zur sprechenden Person, Paulus⁴⁰, wozu auch noch der Hinweis auf 1 Kor 15,32 (und 2 Kor 1,8) gehört, wonach Paulus laut eigener Aussage in Ephesus gegen wilde Tiere gekämpft und viel gelitten habe⁴¹. Ebenfalls zur topischen Besprechung der handelnden Personen gehört der Hinweis auf den Briefboten Tychicus, dessen etymologische Deutung als „schweigsam“ Hieronymus in ausgesprochen origeneischer Manier ebenfalls mit dem Briefinhalt, nämlich voller „Geheimnisse“ zu sein, in Verbindung bringt⁴². Während Hieronymus zum Adressaten des Philemonbriefes nichts sagt, notiert er zu Titus, dass es sich um den Schüler des Paulus handle, den dieser laut Tit 1,4-5 mit der Unterweisung der Gemeinden auf Kreta betraut habe. Damit verbindet er erneut eine Aussage über die sprechende Person: Wenn er Titus zu sich nach Nikopolis rufe und an seiner Stelle Artemas und Tychicus auf Kreta zurücklasse, zeige er damit, dass er es mit der in 2 Kor 11,28 betonten „Sorge um alle Gemeinden“ ernst meine⁴³. Zum Titusbrief erwähnt

39. *In Eph.*, praef. (9): *Scribebat ad Ephesios Dianam colentes ... illam multimammiam quam graeci πολυμαστόν uocant... Scribebat autem ad metropolim Asiae ciuitatem, in qua ita idololatria et quod semper idololatriam sequitur artium magicarum praestigiae uiguerant... Denique triennio ibi apostolus moratus est, nocte et die Dei euangelium praedicans, ut idololatriae arce destructa facile minorum urbium templa caperentur. ...Indigebant enim commendatione apostoli ad Deum, quos tanto tempore daemonum error tenuerat....* *In Eph.* III, praef. (104) verknüpft Hieronymus diese Beschreibung der Epheser mit der Etymologie ihres Namens: Als „Seele“, „Ratschluss“ und „Wille Gottes“ werden die Epheser bezeichnet, weil die Belehrung durch Paulus bewirkt habe, dass sie sich von ihrem magischen Aberglauben abwandten: *Haec idcirco ut docerem quare ‚anima‘ et ‚consilium‘ et ‚uoluntatem Dei‘ Ephesiorum uocabulum sonet qui, artium magicarum praestigiis derelictis, erroris zelum ad ueritatis studium transtulerunt.*

40. Ebenfalls auf die Person des Briefautors Paulus beziehen sich die Überlegungen des Origenes zum Namenswechsel von Saulus zu Paulus im Römerbriefkommentar: *CRm* 1,2,1-4.

41. Hieronymus, *in Eph.* III, praef. (104): *Ob quorum (sc. Ephesiorum) salutem tanto Paulus sudore pugnavit...*

42. *In Eph.* III, praef. (104-105): *Quod autem per Tychicum epistula mittitur, ualde eiusdem epistulae congruit sacramentis. ... Tychicus enim ‚silens‘ interpretatur.... Vgl. int. hebr. nom. (CCSL 72, 77.19): Tychicus tacens.*

43. *In Tit.*, praef. (4): *...scribit ad Titum discipulum suum et in Christo filium quem Cretae reliquerat ad ecclesias instruendas, praecipitque ei ut, cum e duobus Artemas seu Tychicus Cretam fuerit appulsus, ipse Nicopolim ueniat. Iustum quippe erat ut ille qui dixerat: ‚Sollicitudo mea omnium ecclesiarum‘ (2 Kor 11,28) ... non pateretur et sui et Titi absentia Cretenses esse desertos,*

Hieronymus zudem im Anschluss an Tit 3,12 den Abfassungsort Nikopolis, was vielleicht darin begründet ist, dass der Ort eng mit den Adressatinnen seiner Paulinenkommentare, Paula und Eustochium (zu diesen s.u.), verbunden ist: Dort, nämlich „an der Küste von Aktium“, befinde sich „nunmehr der wohl größte Teil“ ihres „Besitzes“⁴⁴.

Auf die *Gattung* und den *Stil* des zu erklärenden Textes⁴⁵ ging Hieronymus nur zum Philemonbrief ein. Im Zusammenhang mit der Verteidigung seiner Echtheit rechtfertigte er die „Kürze“ dieses Briefes mit Hinweisen, erstens auf ebenso kurze Schriften unter den Kleinen Propheten, zweitens auf die Größe der darin enthaltenen Gedanken und drittens auf die Aussage des Paulus in Röm 9,28 über „das abgekürzte Wort, das der Herr über die Erde ergehen lässt“⁴⁶. Das klingt so origeneisch wie die Ausführungen im Matthäuskommentar zur Gattung „Evangelium“, näherhin zu den verschiedenen Evangelien, die im Frühchristentum im Umlauf waren, und zu den vier Evangelien, die sich als kanonisch durchsetzten⁴⁷. Was Hieronymus dazu referiert, deckt sich weitgehend mit entsprechenden Erörterungen des Origenes in der ersten Homilie zum Lukasevangelium⁴⁸, die Hieronymus sehr gut kannte, weil er diese Homilien 392 in das Lateinische übersetzt hatte. Allerdings weist er nicht darauf, sondern auf die *Kirchengeschichte* des Eusebius von Caesarea als Quelle hin⁴⁹, doch hat sich Eusebius seinerseits bereits auf Origenes bezogen⁵⁰.

Am deutlichsten wird die Topik der Prolegomena sichtbar, wo Hieronymus auf *Anlass* und *Inhalt* eines Briefes zu sprechen kommt, weil er dafür die Fachterminologie benutzt. Im Vorwort zum Epheserbriefkommentar gebraucht er die Begriffe *causa*, *argumentum* und *origo*⁵¹. Es ist nicht recht

a quibus primum idololatriae semina pullularunt, sed mitteret eis pro se et Tito Arteman uel Tychicum, quorum doctrina et solatio confouerentur.

44. *Ibid.*: *Scribit igitur Apostolus, o Paula et Eustochium, de Nicopoli quae, in Actiaco litore sita, nunc possessionis uestrae pars uel maxima est....*

45. Im Römerbriefkommentar erwähnte Origenes zu diesem Topos den oft komplizierten und daher wenig klaren Stil des Paulus: *CRm* I,1,1.

46. Hieronymus, in *Philem.*, praef. (80): *Si autem breuitas habetur contemptui, contemnatur Abdias, Naum, Sophonias et alii duodecim prophetarum in quibus tam mira et tam grandia sunt quae feruntur, ut nescias utrum breuitatem sermonum in illis admirari debeas, an magnitudinem sensuum. Quod si intellexerent hi qui epistolam ad Philemonem repudiant, numquam breuitatem despicerent quae pro laciniosis legis oneribus euangelico decore conscripta est, dum breuiatum consummatumque sermonem facit Dominus super terram.*

47. Vgl. in *Matth.*, praef. (60-64).

48. Vgl. Origenes, *HLc* I,1-2.

49. Hieronymus, in *Matth.*, praef. (64): *...ecclesiastica narrat historia....*

50. Vgl. Eusebius von Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* VI,25,4 für die Aussagen zum Matthäusevangelium und *ibid.* VI,25,6 für die zum Lukasevangelium.

51. Hieronymus, in *Eph.*, praef. (8).

ersichtlich, weshalb er drei Begriffe verwendet. Aus dem vorausgehenden Text geht jedenfalls hervor, dass er an das denkt, was griechisch σκοπός und ὑπόθεσις heißt, also an Anlass und Absicht des Autors einerseits und den darauf abgestimmten Inhalt bzw. Gegenstand seines Schreibens andererseits. Hieronymus bestimmte als Aufgabe des Exegeten nämlich, „in das Denken eines Propheten und eines Apostels einzudringen“, wie er sich ausdrückte, um „herauszufinden, weshalb sie geschrieben haben und mit welchen Argumenten sie ihre Ansicht untermauert haben“⁵². Die erste dieser beiden indirekten Fragen bezieht sich offensichtlich auf den σκοπός eines Autors bzw. seines Textes, die zweite auf die ὑπόθεσις, das Thema und den Inhalt des Textes⁵³. Diese *causae et argumenta et origines*, wie Hieronymus die griechischen Begriffe lateinisch wiedergibt, seien je nach Brief entsprechend der unterschiedlichen Orte, Zeiten und Adressaten verschieden, weil Paulus die Wunden der einzelnen Gemeinden nicht wie ein unerfahrener Arzt alle mit ein und derselben Salbe heilen wolle⁵⁴. Im Falle des Epheserbriefes sei die in Ephesus tief verwurzelte Idololatrie – die Hieronymus bereits bei der Charakterisierung der Adressaten angesprochen hatte – der Grund dafür, dass Paulus ungewöhnlich ausführlich auf die Dämonologie eingehe und so geheimnisvoll wie in keinem anderen Brief schreibe und laut Eph 3,9 „der Welt verborgene Mysterien“ enthülle⁵⁵, wie Hieronymus noch einmal im Vorwort zum dritten Buch sagte, wo er sich erneut „über den Inhalt (*argumentum*) des Briefes des Paulus an die Epheser“ äußerte⁵⁶. Solche Gedanken erinnern ebenso sehr an Origenes wie die Ausführungen zum *argumentum* des Briefes an die Galater. Das „Hauptthema“ (*materia*) dieses Briefes sei dasselbe wie das des Römerbriefes, nämlich die Abschaffung des alten Gesetzes durch die Gnade des Evangeliums, doch werde es von Paulus im Blick auf die Adressaten unterschiedlich präsentiert: im Römerbrief auf einer höheren Ebene mit tiefergehenden Argumenten, im Galaterbrief

52. *Ibid.*: ...*in sensum prophetae et apostoli ingredi, intellegere cur scripserint, qua sententiam suam ratione firmaverint...*

53. So auch HEINE, *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome* (Anm. 18), S. 32.

54. Hieronymus, in *Eph.*, praef. (8-9): *Necesse est enim ut iuxta diuersitates locorum et temporum et hominum quibus scriptae sunt (sc. epistolae), diuersas et causas et argumenta et origines habeant. ... sanctus apostolus Paulus per singulas ecclesias uulneribus medetur illatis, nec ad instar imperiti medici uno collyrio omnium oculos uult curare.*

55. In *Eph.*, praef. (10): *Haec (sc. die Idololatrie der Epheser) idcirco uniuersa replicauimus, ut ostenderemus quare apostolus in hac uel potissimum epistula obscuro sensus et ignota saeculis sacramenta' (Eph 3,9) congesserit et de sanctarum contrariorumque uirtutum docuerit potestate....*

56. In *Eph.* III, praef. (103): *...de argumento epistulae Pauli ad Ephesios in primi libri praefatione disserui et ... ostendi quod beatus Apostolus ad nullam ecclesiarum tam mystice scripserit et ‚abscondita saeculis‘ reuelauerit ‚sacramenta‘.*

hingegen auf einer einfacheren Ebene, auf der Paulus eher schimpfe als lehre und nicht Vernunft-, sondern Autoritätsargumente bemühe, weil die Adressaten, wie Hieronymus mit Rekurs auf Gal 3,1 und 3,3 drastisch sagt, noch „dumm“ seien⁵⁷. Wie im Vorwort zum Epheserbriefkommentar verknüpft er also auch hier die Frage nach dem Gegenstand des Briefes und seiner Präsentation mit der Frage nach den handelnden Personen, speziell den Adressaten.

Im Zusammenhang mit dem Thema des Epheserbriefes kam Hieronymus auf die Frage nach seiner *Position* im paulinischen Briefcorpus zu sprechen, die – liest man die Briefe als Corpus von vorne bis hinten durch – seiner Position in der Reihenfolge der Lektüre entspricht. Hieronymus wies dem Epheserbrief die Mitte zu, und zwar sowohl im Blick auf seine „Position“ (*ordo*) als auch im Blick auf seinen „Sinngehalt“ (*sensus*)⁵⁸. Das letztere Verständnis war das wichtigere: Mit der Verortung des Epheserbriefes in der Mitte meinte Hieronymus nicht so sehr eine mittlere Stellung zwischen den vorausgehenden und den folgenden Briefen im Briefcorpus des Paulus als vielmehr eine Mitte in dem Sinne, wie das Herz die Mitte eines Lebewesens sei. Der Brief sei also das Herzstück im Briefcorpus des Paulus, was im Blick auf seinen Inhalt bedeute, dass darin sehr schwierige und tiefgehende Fragen erörtert werden⁵⁹. Diese Einstufung des Epheserbriefes stammt von Origenes, der in ihm den Höhepunkt des gesamten paulinischen Briefcorpus gesehen hat⁶⁰. Es ist ein Strukturelement der paulinischen Hermeneutik des Origenes, die Adressaten des Korintherbriefes als Anfänger im Glauben zu betrachten, diejenigen des Römerbriefes als Fortgeschrittene⁶¹, die des Epheserbriefes

57. *In Gal.*, praef. (7-8): *Argumentum itaque epistulae huius breuiter comprehendens hoc praefatione commoneo ut sciatis eandem esse materiam epistulae Pauli ad Galatas et quae ad Romanos scripta est, sed hoc referre inter utramque quod in illa altiori sensu et profundioribus usus est argumentis, hic quasi ad eos scribens de quibus in consequentibus ait ‚o insensati Galatae‘ (Gal 3,1) et ‚sic insipientes estis‘ (Gal 3,3), tali se sermone moderatus est quo increparet potius quam doceret et quem possent stulti intellegere, ut communes sententias communi oratione uestiret et quos ratio suadere non poterat reuocaret auctoritas. Nullus quidem Apostoli sermo est, uel per epistulam uel praesentis, in quo non laboret docere antiquae legis onera deposita et omnia illa quae in typis et imaginibus praecesserunt ... gratia Euangelii subrepente cessasse ... in his autem duabus, ut dixi, epistulis specialiter antiquae legis cessatio et nouae introductio continetur.*

58. *In Eph.*, praef. (9): *...ad Ephesios ... mediam apostoli epistolam ut ordine ita et sensibus.*

59. *Ibid.*: *Mediam autem dico, non quo primas sequens extremis maior sit, sed quomodo cor animalis in medio est, ut ex hoc intellegatis quantis difficultatibus et quam profundis quaestionibus inuoluta sit.*

60. Vgl. HEINE, *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome* (Anm. 18), S. 48: „Origen ranked Ephesians as the pinnacle of the Pauline epistles“.

61. Vgl. Origenes, *CRm* I,1,2-5, wo er einen analogen geistigen Fortschritt des Paulus darlegt.

aber als Vollkommene, die in die tiefsten Mysterien des christlichen Glaubens eingeweiht werden⁶².

Während die bislang dargestellten Einleitungsfragen den auszulegenden Text und dessen Autor betrafen, beschäftigen sich einige weitere mit dem *Autor des Kommentars*. Im Vorwort zum Epheserbriefkommentar ist im Zusammenhang mit der Frage nach dem Anlass und Inhalt des Textes auch schon die Aufgabe des Kommentators angesprochen worden, „in das Denken eines Propheten und eines Apostels einzudringen“ und Anlass und Inhalt des von ihnen verfassten Textes „herauszufinden“⁶³. Eingehend äußert sich Hieronymus im Vorwort zum dritten Buch des Galaterbriefkommentars zur Aufgabe eines Kommentators und verbunden damit zum Ziel und Zweck (*propositum*) seines Kommentars: Hieronymus schreibe einen Kommentar, „damit das, was von anderen gut gesagt worden ist, so verstanden wird, wie es gesagt worden ist“. Seine „Aufgabe“ (*officium*) sei es, „dunkle Stellen zu erörtern, klare lediglich kurz zu streifen, sich mit unklaren länger zu beschäftigen“. Allgemein anerkannte „Aufgabe bzw. Zweck von Kommentaren“ (*commentariorum opus*) sei daher die „Erklärung“ (*explanatio*) des Textes⁶⁴, und diese Erklärung solle klar und deutlich sein, damit der Kommentar nicht schwer zu verstehen sei „und man zum Verständnis des

62. Vgl. *Prin* III,2,4; *Fr. 1 Cor* 11; 18; 21 JENKINS; *FrEph* 8 GREGG. Gewiss aus dem Epheserbriefkommentar des Origenes stammt die diesbezügliche Auslegung bei Hieronymus, in *Eph.* III,5,24 (125-126): ...*magnam inter Corinthios et Ephesios esse distantiam: illis quasi paruulis atque lactantibus scribitur, in quibus erant dissensiones et schismata et audiebatur fornicatio qualis nec inter gentes quidem; ... Ephesii uero, apud quos fecit triennium et omnia eis Christi aperuit sacramenta* (siehe dazu oben die Zitate in Anm. 56 und 57), *aliter erudiuntur, et habet unusquisque arbitrii liberam potestatem, uel Corinthios sequi uel Ephesios, et saluari aut seruitute Corinthii aut Ephesii libertate. ... Vnde omni labore nitendum, ut magis Ephesios quam Corinthios aemulemur...* Vgl. ferner in *Eph.* III,6,12 (141-142). Auch hinter *Ep.* 37,4 steht diese Unterscheidung zwischen den Adressaten der Korintherbriefe und des Epheserbriefes: *Corinthii, in quibus fornicatio audiebatur et talis fornicatio, qualis nec inter gentes quidem* (1 Kor 5,1), *lacte pascuntur, quia necdum poterant solidum cibum capere* (vgl. 1 Kor 3,2; Hebr 5,12.14). *Ephesii autem, in quibus nullum crimen arguitur, ipso domino caelesti uestuntur pane et sacramentum, quod a saeculis absconditum fuerat* (vgl. Eph 3,9), *agnoscunt*. Siehe dazu F. COCCHINI, *La comunità di Efeso, comunità di spirituali, nel Commento alla Lettera agli Efesini di Origene*, in L. PADOVESE (Hg.), *Atti del II Simposio di Efeso su S. Giovanni Apostolo* (Turchia: La Chiesa e la sua storia, 3), Roma, Istituto Franciscano di Spiritualità Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano, 1992, 113-122, erneut in: EAD., *Origene: Teologo esegeta per un'identità cristiana*, Bologna, Dehoniane, 2006, 301-310.

63. Hieronymus, in *Eph.*, praef. (8) (zitiert oben in Anm. 52).

64. In *Gal.* III, praef. (158): ...*me (sc. Hieronymus) non panegyricum aut controuersiam scribere sed commentarium, id est hoc habere propositum, non ut mea uerba laudentur, sed ut quae ab alio bene dicta sunt ita intellegantur ut dicta sunt. Officii mei est obscura disserere, manifesta perstringere, in dubiis immorari; unde et a plerisque commentariorum opus explanatio nominatur.*

Exegeten nicht einen weiteren Exegeten braucht“⁶⁵. Hieronymus formuliert hier eine prägnante Definition dessen, was ein Kommentator bzw. sein Kommentar zu leisten habe. Dabei wird auch der Grund genannt, der topisch in so gut wie sämtlichen Kommentaren der Spätantike als Anlass dafür angeführt wird, überhaupt Erklärungen zu Texten zu verfassen, nämlich deren „Dunkelheit“, d.h. Unklarheit. Im Vorwort zum Epheserbriefkommentar weist Hieronymus nur indirekt auf diesen Topos hin, wenn er die „großen Schwierigkeiten“ (*quantae difficultates*) und „unklaren Bedeutungen“ (*obscuri sensus*) im Epheserbrief hervorhebt⁶⁶. Origenes, der hinter diesen Ausführungen erneut zumindest teilweise stehen dürfte, hat in seinen Kommentaren immer wieder auf die Unklarheit des Textes als Grund für die Notwendigkeit seiner Auslegung hingewiesen⁶⁷.

Angesichts dieser Schwierigkeiten, die mit der Aufgabe, einen Kommentar zu schreiben, verbunden waren, betonte ein Kommentator regelmäßig die eigene Unfähigkeit, diese Aufgabe erfüllen zu können. Im Vorwort zum dritten Buch des Galaterbriefkommentars notierte Hieronymus zum Topos der Unklarheit des Textes ausdrücklich, dass er sich „seiner Schwachheit und seiner mageren Begabung durchaus bewusst“ sei⁶⁸. Diese rhetorische Bescheidenheit ist so wenig ernst zu nehmen wie der Hinweis im Vorwort zum zweiten Buch des Epheserbriefkommentars, dass er den Kommentar ohne langes Nachdenken unter Verwendung von Alltagssprache ausgesprochen rasch – „bisweilen bis zu tausend Zeilen pro Tag“ – diktiert habe⁶⁹. Eine solche Bemerkung soll sprachliche und stilistische Mängel entschuldigen, die in Wirklichkeit gar nicht vorhanden sind, und ist nichts anderes als eine konventionell formulierte *captatio benevolentiae*. Ernster gemeint ist hingegen der Verweis auf eine Erkrankung – Hieronymus war von schwächerer Konstitution und oft krank⁷⁰ – und einen enormen Zeitdruck, um eventuelle

65. *In Gal.* III, praef. (160): ...*qui per me intellecturus est Apostolum nolo ut mea scripta difficulter intellegat et ad interpretem cognoscendum alium quaerat interpretem.*

66. *In Eph.*, praef. (9), zitiert oben in Anm. 59; bzw. 10, zitiert oben in Anm. 55).

67. Vgl. z.B. Origenes, *CCt* I,1,11; *Hler* IV,1; XII,13; *Clo* V,1; VI,34,172-173; *FrMt* 138.1. Siehe dazu SKEB, *Exegese und Lebensform* (Anm. 1), S. 301-303. 323-325; ferner M. HARL, *Origène et la sémantique du langage biblique*, in *VigChr* 26 (1972) 161-187, S. 174-181.

68. Hieronymus, *in Gal.* III, praef. (157): *Tertium ad Galatas, o Paula et Eustochium, uolumen hoc cudimus non ignari imbecillitatis nostrae et exilis ingenii riuiulum uix paruo strepentem murmure sentientes.*

69. *In Eph.* II, praef. (53): ...*in commune precor, ut sciatis me non cogitatum diu limatumque proferre sermonem, sed ad reuelanda mysteria Scripturarum uti uerbis pene de triuio et interdum per singulos dies usque ad numerum mille uersuum peruenire...*

70. Siehe dazu die bei FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 59-60, zusammengetragenen Stellen, ferner B. LANÇON, *Maladie et médecine dans la correspondance de Jérôme*, in Y.-M. DUVAL (Hg.), *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient: XVI^e centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem. Actes du colloque de Chantilly (septembre 1986)* (Collection des

Unzulänglichkeiten des Matthäuskommentars zu rechtfertigen⁷¹. Infolge dieser Demutshetorik gehört es zur Topik von Kommentarvorworten, die Adressaten darum zu bitten, dem Kommentator durch ihre Gebete beizustehen: Mit den Worten *orantibus uobis* wandte sich Hieronymus wiederholt an Paula und Eustochium⁷². Diese Beistandsbitte mündet gleichfalls formelhaft in eine Anrufung des Heiligen Geistes⁷³, damit der Exeget bei der Auslegung der neutestamentlichen Briefe vom selben Geist erfüllt sei wie deren Verfasser beim Schreiben⁷⁴. Überflüssig zu betonen, dass es auch für alle diese Topoi Belege in den Kommentarproömien des Origenes gibt⁷⁵.

Somit lassen sich in den Vorworten des Hieronymus zu seinen Paulinenkommentaren und zum Matthäuskommentar eine ganze Reihe von Themen finden, die in den Prolegomena zu wissenschaftlichen Kommentaren in der Spätantike üblicherweise erörtert worden sind. Dazu gehören:

- Echtheit (Autorschaft) des Textes;
- Charakterisierung der handelnden Personen (Briefautor, Adressaten, Briefbote);
- Gattung und Stil des Textes;
- Anlass und Absicht des Autors;
- Thema und Inhalt des Textes;
- Position des Briefes im Briefcorpus;
- Aufgabe des Kommentators;
- Ziel und Zweck des Kommentars;
- Grund für das Abfassen des Kommentars;
- Betonung der mangelhaften Befähigung des Kommentators;
- Bitte um Beistand durch die Adressaten des Kommentars im Gebet;
- Anrufung des Heiligen Geistes als Helfer.

Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 122), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1988, 355-366.

71. Hieronymus, *in Matth.*, praef. (68-70): *At tu (sc. der Adressat Eusebius von Cremona) in duabus hebdomadibus, imminente iam pascha et spirantibus uentis, dictare me cogis, ut quando notarii excipiant, quando scribantur scedulae, quando emendentur, quo spatio digerantur ad purum, maxime cum scias me ita tribus mensibus languisse ut uix nunc ingredi incipiam nec possim laboris magnitudinem breuitate temporis compensare.*

72. *In Philem.*, praef. (80); *in Gal.*, praef. (8); *in Gal.* III, praef. (160); *in Eph.*, praef. (9). Vgl. *in Eph.* III, praef. (103) unter Einbeziehung von Marcella: *...orationum uestrarum et sanctae Marcellae fultus auxilio....*

73. *In Philem.*, praef. (80): *Quae, orantibus uobis et ipso nobis Sancto Spiritu suggerente, quo scripta sunt suis locis explanare conabimur.*

74. *In Gal.* III, praef. (160): *...si orantibus uobis illum possem in exponendis epistolis eorum habere spiritum quem illi in dictando habuerunt....*

75. Vgl. die entsprechenden Gebetsanrufungen bei Origenes, *Clo* I,15,89; VI,2,10; XX,1,1; XXVIII,1,6; XXXII,1,2; *CRm* I,1,1.

In der Art, wie Hieronymus dieses Set an Themen besprach, lassen sich durchaus für ihn charakteristische Einträge feststellen, doch dürfte vieles auf Origenes zurückgehen. Im Blick auf diesen wird durch die Paulinenkommentare des Hieronymus die Palette der Einleitungsfragen, die Origenes in seinen Vorworten erörterte, erheblich bereichert.

III. FÜR HIERONYMUS CHARAKTERISTISCHE EIGENHEITEN DER PROLOGTOPIK

Zu dem Set an Themen, die in Prolegomena zu Kommentaren erörtert wurden, gehörten noch einige weitere Aspekte, die in den Vorworten des Hieronymus in einer Weise behandelt werden, dass sie weniger im Traditionsgut des Origenes – wiewohl auch dieses noch bisweilen durchscheint – als vielmehr in der Lebenswelt des Hieronymus verankert sind. Obwohl ein Großteil der von Hieronymus herangezogenen Topik aus den Kommentaren des Origenes stammt, hat der lateinische Exeget in Bethlehem doch auch Eigenes eingebracht und manchmal völlig selbstständig argumentiert. Als ehemaligem Schüler des Grammatiklehrers und einflussreichen Terenz- und Vergil-Kommentators Aelius Donatus⁷⁶ in Rom war ihm, wie wir annehmen dürfen, solche Kommentartopik sicherlich vertraut⁷⁷. Dadurch bekommen seine Vorworte im Vergleich zu denen des Origenes ein etwas anderes Profil, und zwar gerade dadurch, weil sie ihm so nahestehen, sich aber doch nicht einfach nur im Nachsprechen des Origenes erschöpfen.

Auf einer ersten Ebene wird dieses Profil bei zwei Themen sichtbar, die ebenfalls gerne in Prologen abgehandelt wurden: die Auseinandersetzung mit Gegnern und mit Vorgängern. Was die *Gegner* anbelangt, so ist an dieser Front der Einfluss des Origenes noch sehr stark. Wenn im Vorwort zum Philemonbriefkommentar Valentinus, Markion und Apelles als die Gegner genannt werden, mit denen sich Hieronymus auseinandersetzte⁷⁸, dann war diese für Origenes typische antignostische Front – er nannte statt Apelles meist Basilides⁷⁹, aber auch Apelles kommt vor⁸⁰ – zur Zeit des Hieronymus

76. Siehe dazu L. HOLTZ, *Donat et la tradition de l'enseignement grammatical. Étude sur l'Ars Donati et sa diffusion (IV^e-IX^e siècle) et édition critique Ars grammatica*, Paris, CNRS, 1981 (2010), S. 40-46.

77. So auch die Annahme von HEINE, *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome* (Anm. 18), S. 35.

78. Hieronymus, in *Philem.*, praef. (79, zitiert oben in Anm. 29).

79. Vgl. Origenes, *HNm* XII,2; *Hlos* VII,7; XII,3; *H73Ps* 2,6; *H77Ps* 5,7; *Hler* X,5; XVII,2; *CMtS* 46.

80. Vgl. *HGn* 2,2; *CMtS* 46; 47; *CC* V,54.

längst Vergangenheit. Das ist das deutlichste Indiz dafür, dass dieses Vorwort vermutlich komplett von Origenes stammt. Allenfalls der Hinweis, dass seine Kürze den Philemonbrief davor bewahrt habe, von Markion überarbeitet zu werden⁸¹, könnte auf Hieronymus zurückgehen, weil sich dieses Argument bei Tertullian findet⁸² und Hieronymus es von diesem übernommen haben könnte. Genauso verhält es sich im Vorwort zum Titusbriefkommentar: Die Nennung von Markion, Basilides und „allen Häretikern, die das Alte Testament zerpfücken“ – auch Tatian wird im Weiteren noch genannt –, ist typisch für Origenes⁸³; lediglich in der spezifischen lateinischen Formulierung des Hieronymus⁸⁴ ist ein Anklang an Cicero feststellbar⁸⁵. Eindeutig auf Hieronymus geht jedoch die Nennung des Porphyrius als Hauptgegners der Auslegung im Vorwort zum Galaterbriefkommentar zurück⁸⁶. In der zugehörigen Fachforschung wird dies zwar oft falsch dargestellt, indem man die spezielle Form der Auslegung des Apostelstreits in Gal 2,11-14 durch Origenes als Reaktion auf die Kritik des Porphyrius beschreibt. Doch hat Porphyrius seine Kritik an dieser Perikope in seiner Streitschrift gegen die Christen erst etliche Jahrzehnte nach dem Tod des Origenes geschrieben⁸⁷. Die von Hieronymus dagegen gebotene Auslegung von Gal 2,11-14⁸⁸ ist zwar die Deutung des Origenes, doch hat dieser sie nicht schon gegen Porphyrius entworfen, sondern erst Hieronymus sie benutzt, um der Kritik des Porphyrius entgegenzutreten⁸⁹.

Noch deutlicher dem Leben des Hieronymus entstammt die Kritik, die er im Vorwort zum Epheserbriefkommentar an Leuten übt, die sich aus

81. Hieronymus, in *Philem.*, praef. (79-80): *Et quoniam Marcionis fecimus mentionem, Pauli esse ad Philemonem epistolam saltem Marcione auctore ducantur; qui, cum ceteras epistulas eius uel non susceperit, uel quaedam in his mutauerit atque corroserit, in hanc solam manus non ausus est mittere, quia suam illam breuitas defendebat.*

82. Tertullian, *adv. Marc.* V,21,1: *Soli huic epistolae breuitas sua profuit, ut falsarias manus Marcionis euaderet.*

83. Hieronymus, in *Tit.*, praef. (3, zitiert oben in Anm. 30).

84. *Ibid.*: *...cum haeretica auctoritate pronuntient et dicant: ‚Illa epistula Pauli est, haec non est‘....*

85. Cicero, *fam.* IX,16,4: *...Servius ... facile diceret: ‚Hic uersus Plauti non est, hic est‘....*

86. Hieronymus, in *Gal.*, praef. (8): *Quod nequaquam intellegens Bataneotes et sceleratus ille Prophyrius in primo operis sui aduersum nos libro Petrum a Paulo obicit esse reprehensum quod non recto pede incederet ad euangelizandum, uolens et illi maculam erroris inurere et huic procacitatis et in commune ficti dogmatis accusare mendacium, dum inter se ecclesiarum principes discrepent.*

87. Vgl. Porphyrius, *adv. Christ.* I frg. 21A-D HARNACK bzw. frg. 1-4T BECKER.

88. Hieronymus, in *Gal.* I,2,11-13 (52-57). Vgl. *Ep.* 112,6,11; in *Is.* XIV,26 (53,12); Augustinus, *Ep.* 82,22.

89. Siehe dazu A. FÜRST, *Augustins Briefwechsel mit Hieronymus* (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband, 29), Münster, Aschendorff, 1999, S. 15 (*ibid.* in Anm. 132 viele Hinweise auf Literatur mit der genannten falschen Darstellung).

Faulheit der Bildung verweigern und aus dieser Haltung heraus Gebildete meinen kritisieren zu müssen⁹⁰. Die Ausführungen dazu spiegeln klar die Lebensumstände des Hieronymus: seine Übersetzungstätigkeit vom Griechischen ins Lateinische, sein zurückgezogenes Leben im Kloster in Bethlehem, auf das er im Vorwort zum zweiten Buch nochmals plastisch eingeht⁹¹, und seine Studien bei Didymus von Alexandria; außerdem bezieht er sich auf lateinische Autoren, und zwar auf Cicero, Tertullian, Cyprian, Laktanz und Hilarius⁹². All dies ist zu dem Bereich der Prolegomena zu zählen, in dem der Autor etwas über sich selbst sagt. Hieronymus gibt in diesen Partien eine ausführliche *apologia sui* bzw. seiner Arbeit, wie er sie in vielen seiner Vorreden geschrieben hat, besonders markant etwa im Vorwort zu den *Hebraicae quaestiones in Genesim*, zur Übersetzung der *Chronik* des Eusebius oder in sämtlichen Vorreden zu seiner Bibelübersetzung nach dem Hebräischen, der *Vulgata*⁹³. Sich unablässig mit Vorwürfen gegen seine Arbeit auseinanderzusetzen ist eine Eigenheit der Vorworte des Hieronymus zu seinen Bibelübersetzungen und -kommentaren, mit der er sich von allen anderen Exegeten der Spätantike markant abhebt und durch die er der traditionellen, eher technischen Form solcher Vorreden einen ausgesprochen persönlichen Stempel aufdrückte.

Charakteristisch für die Vorworte des Hieronymus ist es schließlich, auf *Vorgänger* bei der Kommentierung des jeweiligen biblischen Textes einzugehen. Das ist schon deshalb anders als bei Origenes, weil der Alexandriner als Schöpfer des christlichen Bibelkommentars nach wissenschaftlichen Standards keine Vorgänger im eigentlichen Sinne hatte und daher nur gelegentlich darauf hinwies, was christliche Theologen vor ihm zu einer Bibelstelle gesagt haben, und sich mit deren Ansichten auseinandersetzt⁹⁴.

90. Hieronymus, *in Eph.*, praef. (7): ...*miror quosdam existisse qui aut ipsi se inertiae et somno dantes, nolint quae praeclara sunt discere aut ceteros qui id studii habent reprehendendos putent.*

91. *In Eph.* II, praef. (53): ...*qui in monasterii solitudine constitutus et illud praesepe contra uident in quo uagientem paruulum festini adorauere pastores....*

92. *In Eph.*, praef. (7): *Quibus cum possim districtius respondere et breuiter eos uel offensos dimittere uel placatos, multo esse melius Scripturas legere quam augendis et cumulandis opibus inhiare. ... placere mihi otium meum et solitudinem omni celebritate iucundiores uideri. ... Non digne graeca in latinum transfero: aut graecos lege, si eiusdem linguae habes scientiam, aut si tantum latinum es, noli de gratuito munere iudicare....* *Ibid.* (7-8) werden die genannten Autoren aufgeführt.

93. Siehe die Übersetzungen dieser Vorworte bei FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 316-349.

94. Im Johanneskommentar setzte Origenes sich mit der Auslegung dieses Evangeliums durch den Gnostiker Herakleon auseinander, von dem er 48 der erhaltenen 51 Fragmente überliefert: W. VÖLKER, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* (Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften. NF, 5), Tübingen, Mohr,

Der wichtigste Vorgänger des Origenes in der philosophisch grundierten Erklärung der Bibel war der hellenistische Jude Philon von Alexandria, auf den er oft als „einen unserer Vorgänger“ hinwies und den er gelegentlich auch namentlich nannte⁹⁵. Dies tat er jedoch im Zuge seiner Auslegungen, nicht im Vorwort, und er setzte sich – hierin ganz anders als Hieronymus – nicht kritisch mit ihm auseinander, und zwar schlicht deswegen, weil er sein Vorbild war⁹⁶.

Im Vorwort zum Galaterbriefkommentar verwies Hieronymus auf sehr viele Vorgänger. Im lateinischen Bereich habe er, behauptete er, keinen Vorgänger, denn die nach 363 verfassten Paulinenkommentare des Marius Victorinus⁹⁷ kannte er zwar, habe sie aber nicht benutzt, weil Marius Victorinus ganz mit weltlicher Wissenschaft beschäftigt gewesen sei und daher über keine wirkliche Expertise in den Heiligen Schriften verfügt habe⁹⁸. Dieses Urteil über die ersten lateinischen Bibelkommentare zu den Paulusbriefen diente Hieronymus dazu, sich selbst mit bemerkenswerter Chuzpe – fängt er doch selber gerade erst an, ganze biblische Schriften zu kommentieren – als ersten lateinischen Paulusexegeten zu stilisieren. Den anonymen

1932, S. 63-86. In *HSam* 1 bezieht sich Origenes einmal auf „unsere Vorgänger“ (*priores nostri*), worunter in diesem Fall Hippolyt von Rom gemeint sein könnte: A. FÜRST, *Origenes Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung* 7, Berlin – New York, De Gruyter; Freiburg i.Br. – Basel – Wien, Herder, 2014, S. 120 Anm. 6.

95. Origenes, *CC* V,55. Vgl. ferner *FrGn* D 13 und E 106 METZLER; *HEx* II,2; *HLv* VIII,6; *HNm* IX,5; *HlOs* XVI,1; *Hler* XIV,5; *CMt* X,22; XVII,17; *CMtS* 69; *Clo* VI,42,217. Namentliche Nennungen Philons: *CC* IV,51; VI,21; *CMt* XV,3.

96. Siehe die Überblicke bei D.T. RUNIA, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, Assen – Minneapolis, MN, Van Gorcum, 1993, S. 157-183; ID., *Philo and Origen*, in R.J. DALY (Hg.), *Origeniana Quinta: Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989* (BETL, 105), Leuven, Leuven University Press – Peeters, 1992, 333-339, erneut in ID., *Philo and the Church Fathers: A Collection of Papers* (SupplVigChr, 32), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 1995, 117-125.

97. Die erhaltenen Kommentare zum Galater-, Philipper- und Epheserbrief (diejenigen zum Römer- und zu den beiden Korintherbriefen sind verloren) sind ediert von F. GORI, *Marii Victorini Opera. Pars II: Opera Exegetica* (CSEL, 83/2), Wien, Hölder – Pichler – Tempsky, 1981. Siehe dazu G. RASPANTI, *Mario Vittorino esegeta di S. Paolo*, Palermo, L'Epos, 1996; S.A. COOPER, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005; ID., *Philosophical Exegesis in Marius Victorinus' Commentaries on Paul*, in LÖSSL – WATT (Hgg.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (Anm. 5), 67-89.

98. Hieronymus, in *Gal.*, praef. (6): ...*adgrediar opus intemptatum ante me linguae nostrae scriptoribus et a Graecis quoque ipsis uix paucis, ut rei poscebat dignitas, usurpatum. Non quo ignorem Gaium Marium Victorinum, qui Romae me puero rhetoricam docuit, edidisse Commentarios in Apostolum, sed quod occupatus ille eruditione saecularium litterarum Scripturas omnino ignorauerit et nemo possit, quamuis eloquens, de eo bene disputare quod nesciat.* Siehe dazu A. CAIN, *Jerome's Pauline Commentaries between East and West: Tradition and Innovation in the Commentary on Galatians*, in LÖSSL – WATT (Hgg.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (Anm. 5), 191-110.

Kommentar zu sämtlichen Paulusbriefen des sogenannten Ambrosiaster, der um 380 herum in Rom entstanden ist⁹⁹, muss er gekannt haben, hat ihn aber an der vorliegenden Stelle offenbar aus Rivalität gezielt ebenso verschwiegen wie in seinem Katalog christlicher Schriftsteller¹⁰⁰. Wohl aber nannte er eine längere Reihe von griechischen Exegeten. Nur wenige brauchbare Auszüge habe er den Galaterbriefkommentaren des Didymus von Alexandria, des Laodizeners, „der die Kirche neulich verlassen hat“ – gemeint ist Apollinaris von Laodizea –, des „alten Häretikers“ Alexander – es ist unklar, wer hier gemeint ist¹⁰¹ –, des Eusebius von Emesa und des Theodor von Heraklea entnommen¹⁰². Ansonsten jedoch sei er „den Kommentaren des Origenes gefolgt“, wozu er die verschiedenen Schriften des Alexandriner zum Galaterbrief aufzählte¹⁰³. Hieronymus legte hier die Hauptquelle für seinen Galaterbriefkommentar durchaus offen. Das Problem daran ist, dass er zu verschleiern versuchte, wie groß seine Abhängigkeit von Origenes tatsächlich war. Seine Vorgehensweise beschrieb er nämlich so, dass er nach

99. Ediert von H.J. VOGELS (ed.), *Ambrosiastri qui dicitur commentarius in epistulas paulinas* (CSEL, 81/1-3), Wien, Hoelder – Pichler – Tempsky, 1966-1969. Siehe dazu G. RASPANTI, *Aspetti formali dell'esegesi paolina dell'Ambrosiaster*, in *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 16 (1999) 507-536.

100. Zu den Indizien für eine Rivalität zwischen dem Ambrosiaster und Hieronymus siehe H.J. VOGELS, *Ambrosiaster und Hieronymus*, in *RBen* 66 (1956) 14-19; D.G. HUNTER, *On the Sin of Adam and Eve: A Little-known Defense of Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster*, in *HTR* 82 (1989) 283-299; A. CAIN, *In Ambrosiaster's Shadow: A Critical Re-evaluation of the Last Surviving Letter Exchange between Pope Damasus and Jerome*, in *REAug* 51 (2005) 257-277; LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, *Prologue Topics* (Anm. 23), S. 42-46.

101. Einige Forscher – siehe die Hinweise bei FÜRST, *Briefwechsel* (Anm. 89), S. 4 Anm. 27 –, darunter v.a. SOUTER, *Earliest Latin Commentaries* (Anm. 19), S. 108, haben vorgeschlagen, darunter den von Tertullian, *Carn. Christ.* XV,3; XVI,1; XVII,1, erwähnten Valentinianer Alexander zu verstehen, doch ist nicht bekannt, dass dieser einen Kommentar zu den Paulusbriefen geschrieben hätte.

102. Hieronymus, *in Gal.*, praef. (6-7): *Praetermitto Didymum, uidentem meum, et Laodiceum de ecclesia nuper egressum et Alexandrum, ueterem haereticum, Eusebium quoque Emesenum et Theodorum Heracleoten, qui et ipsi nonnullos super hac re commentariolos reliquerunt. E quibus uel si pauca decerperem fieret aliquid quod non penitus contemneretur.* Von diesen Galaterbriefkommentaren haben sich nur von demjenigen des Eusebius von Emesa, der laut Hieronymus, *Vir. ill.* 91,2, einen zehn Bücher umfassenden Kommentar zum Galaterbrief geschrieben hat, einige Fragmente erhalten (S. 46-52 STAAB bzw. S. 145*-151* BUYTAERT), die BAMMEL, *Pauluskommentare des Hieronymus* (Anm. 22), S. 194-195 (mit Anm. 52), mit den entsprechenden Stellen bei Hieronymus vergleicht. A. CAIN, *An Unidentified Patristic Quotation in Jerome's Commentary on Galatians (3.6.11)*, in *JTS NS* 61 (2010) 216-225, hat ein weiteres anonymes Zitat aus dem Galaterbriefkommentar des Eusebius identifiziert.

103. Hieronymus, *in Gal.*, praef. (6): *...imbecillitatem uirium mearum sentiens (das ist der Topos der Betonung der mangelhaften eigenen Befähigung) Origenis Commentarios sum secutus. Scripsit enim ille uir in epistulam Pauli ad Galatas quinque proprie uolumina et decimum Stomatium suorum librum commatico super explanatione eius sermone compleuit; Tractatus quoque uarios et Excerpta, quae uel sola possent sufficere, composuit.*

Lektüre aller dieser Kommentare diktiert habe, was er sich davon gemerkt habe, ohne zwischen den eigenen Gedanken, die er darunter mischte, und den übernommenen zu unterscheiden und ohne groß auf Ausdrücke und Inhalte zu achten¹⁰⁴. Auf diese Weise arbeitete Hieronymus auch sonst¹⁰⁵. Im vorliegenden Fall indes verschleierte er mit dieser Beschreibung, die man zum Topos der Arbeitsweise des Autors zählen kann, dass er weithin und oft wörtlich einfach Origenes ausschrieb¹⁰⁶. Im Vorwort zum Matthäuskommentar zählte er eine ähnliche Reihe von Vorgängern wie im Galaterbriefkommentar auf, nämlich Theophilus von Antiochia, Hippolyt, Theodor von Heraklea, Apollinaris von Laodizea, Didymus von Alexandria, Hilarius von Poitiers, Victorinus von Pettau und Fortunatianus von Aquileja. Diesen Autoren habe er jedoch nur wenig entnommen, da er vor allem Origenes gefolgt sei, näherhin dessen 25 Büchern über das Matthäusevangelium sowie dessen Homilien und Scholien darüber¹⁰⁷. Noch im Jahr 398 mitten in den origenistischen Streitigkeiten beschrieb er also seine Arbeitsweise so wie mehr als zehn Jahre zuvor bei der Abfassung der Paulinenkommentare und verheimlichte seine Abhängigkeit von Origenes nicht.

Auf dieselben Verhältnisse stoßen wir im Epheserbriefkommentar. Im Vorwort zu diesem nannte Hieronymus drei Vorgänger: Origenes, Apollinaris von Laodizea und Didymus von Alexandria. Den Epheserbriefkommentaren der beiden letztgenannten, die Hieronymus andernorts gerne als seine Lehrer anführte (s.o.), habe er nur „wenig entnommen“, den drei Büchern des Origenes zum Epheserbrief hingegen sei er „zum Teil

104. *In Gal.*, praef. (7): *Itaque, ut simpliciter fatear, legi haec omnia et in mentem meam plurima coaceruans, accito notario, uel mea uel aliena dictavi, nec ordinis nec uerborum interdum nec sensuum memor.* In *Ep.* 112,4 zitierte er diesen Passus, als er im Jahr 405 seine Arbeitsweise gegenüber Augustinus rechtfertigte.

105. Vgl. z.B. in *Eccl.* IV,13-16; in *Es.* XI, prol.; in *Hier.*, prol. 3; IV,41; *Ep.* 20,2; 72,5; 119,1. In *Apol. adv. Rufin.* I,16.22; III,11 verteidigt er diese Methode.

106. *In Gal.* II,3,19-20 (97-98) schreibt Hieronymus die Kommentierung des Origenes fast wörtlich ab, wie aus dem Vergleich mit diesem Passus bei Pamphilus, *Apol. Orig.* 120, hervorgeht. Zu Gal 4,28 und 5,24 gibt er jeweils die Erklärung wieder, die Origenes zu einem von der ihm vorliegenden lateinischen Fassung abweichenden Bibeltext gegeben hat: *in Gal.* II,4,28 (143-144); III,5,24 (197-198). Siehe dazu FÜRST, *Briefwechsel* (Anm. 89), S. 6-7, ferner die oben in Anm. 19 aufgeführte Literatur sowie jetzt die vielen Hinweise in den kommentierenden Fußnoten zur Übersetzung dieses Kommentars bei A. CAIN, *St. Jerome, Commentary on Galatians* (The Fathers of the Church, 121), Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

107. *In Matth.*, praef. (68): *Legisse me fateor ante annos plurimos in Matheum Origenis uiginti quinque uolumina et totidem eius homelias commaticumque interpretationis genus, et Theophili Antiochenae urbis episcopi commentarios, Hippolyti quoque martyris, et Theodori Heraclotae Apollinarisque Laodiceni ac Didimi Alexandrini et Latinorum Hilarii, Victorini, Fortunatiani opuscula, e quibus, etiam si parua carperem, dignum aliquid memoriae scriberetur.*

gefolgt¹⁰⁸. Wie beim Galaterbriefkommentar verschleierte er damit die wahren Abhängigkeiten. Während nur einige wenige Bemerkungen im Epheserbriefkommentar des Hieronymus vielleicht auf Apollinaris und keine einzige Stelle auf Didymus zurückgeführt werden können¹⁰⁹, war er nahezu komplett von Origenes abhängig. Das zeigen die griechischen Kate-
nenfragmente von Origenes' Kommentar, die man, wie Ronald Heine dies in seiner englischen Übersetzung getan hat¹¹⁰, problemlos parallel neben den lateinischen Text des Hieronymus stellen kann. Im späteren Streit mit Rufinus von Aquileja über seine Übersetzungsmethode gab Hieronymus denn auch stillschweigend zu erkennen, dass er den Epheserbriefkommentar des Origenes *übersetzt* hat – jedenfalls widersprach er dieser Ausdrucksweise des Rufinus nicht¹¹¹. Man sollte sich dabei allerdings darüber im Klaren sein, was ‚Übersetzen‘ in der Spätantike bedeutete, nämlich eine Mischung aus Wiedergabe und Adaption und damit Modifikation des Textes zu sein¹¹². Die spätantiken Übersetzer wollten einen Autor oder einen Text, den sie für nützlich oder wichtig hielten, ihrem Lesepublikum nahebringen. Zu diesem Zweck transferierten sie den Text in die Sprache und Denkwelt, die ihren potentiellen Lesern und Leserinnen – es waren gerade im Falle des Hieronymus nicht wenige Frauen unter den Rezipienten – verständlich waren. Solches Transferieren umfasste alles von wörtlicher Wiedergabe über Paraphrase bis hin zu freier Wiedergabe und Neuformulierung des Gedankens unter Hinzufügung eigener Reflexionen; auch Auslassungen und Einschübe wurden vorgenommen. Hieronymus selbst hat seine Übersetzungspraxis in apologetischer Absicht – er verwarfte sich gegen den Vorwurf der Verfälschung im Falle der Homilien und Kommentare des Origenes, die er übersetzte –

108. In *Eph.*, praef. (11): *Illud quoque in praefatione commoneo ut sciatis Origenem tria uolumina in hanc epistolam conscripsisse, quem et nos ex parte secuti sumus. Apollinarem etiam et Didymum quosdam commentariolos edidisse, e quibus licet pauca decerpimus et nonnulla quae nobis uidebantur adiecimus siue subtraximus, ut studiosus statim in principio lector agnoscat hoc opus uel alienum esse uel nostrum.*

109. So HEINE, *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome* (Anm. 18), S. 4 Anm. 19. Dabei ist freilich zu bedenken, dass die Epheserbriefkommentare des Apollinaris und Didymus verloren sind, was die Überprüfbarkeit der Behauptung des Hieronymus eigentlich unmöglich macht.

110. Siehe *ibid.*, S. 73-272.

111. Vgl. Hieronymus, *Apol. adv. Rufin.* III,12: *...a me translatae Origenis septuaginta homelias et nonnullos tomos in Apostolum iactes...*, mit Rekurs auf Rufinus, *Orig. Prin.* praef. 2: *Qui (sc. Hieronymus) cum ultra septuaginta libellos Origenis, quos homileticos appellauit, aliquantos etiam de tomis in apostolum scriptis transtulisset in Latinum...* Siehe dazu HEINE, *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome* (Anm. 18), S. 5.

112. Siehe dazu die grundlegende Studie von H. MARTI, *Übersetzer der Augustin-Zeit: Interpretation von Selbstzeugnissen* (Studia et testimonia antiqua, 14), München, Fink, 1974, S. 61-139. Für die Übersetzungspraxis des Hieronymus siehe FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 92-95 und die *ibid.*, S. 410-411 zusammengestellte Literatur.

einmal in diesem Sinne beschrieben: „Das, was gut ist, habe ich übersetzt, das Schlechte aber habe ich weggelassen, verbessert oder verschwiegen“¹¹³. Ein Effekt dieser Verfahrensweise war, dass die Grenze zwischen Übersetzer und Autor verschwimmen konnte. Am Schluss des Vorworts beschrieb Hieronymus seinen Epheserbriefkommentar in eben diesem Sinne: „Dieses Werk stammt teils von einem anderen (*sc.* Origenes), teils von mir“¹¹⁴. Zum Galaterbriefkommentar gab er eine ganz ähnliche Beschreibung seiner Arbeitsweise: Nach der Lektüre der Kommentare seiner Vorgänger habe er sich möglichst viel gemerkt und dann „entweder eigene oder fremde Gedanken diktiert“¹¹⁵. Hieronymus gab seine Paulinenkommentare als Autorenwerke heraus, obwohl es sich sehr weitgehend oder nahezu gänzlich um mehr oder wenige überarbeitete Übersetzungen vor allem der entsprechenden Kommentare des Origenes handelte¹¹⁶.

Der markanteste Unterschied zwischen den Kommentarproömien des Origenes und des Hieronymus ergibt sich aus ihrem unterschiedlichen *sozialen Setting*¹¹⁷. Der Sitz im Leben der Kommentartätigkeit des Origenes war die Schule im Sinne des philosophischen Schulbetriebs der römischen Kaiserzeit, den Origenes in seiner christlichen Hochschule in Caesarea (und auch schon davor in Alexandria) praktizierte. Hieronymus hingegen diktierte seine Kommentare im Kontext eines monastischen Gelehrtendaseins *in his study*, „im Gehäus“, wie er schon von Zeitgenossen beschrieben¹¹⁸ und später in der bildenden Kunst der Humanistenzeit nicht zu Unrecht oft dargestellt worden ist¹¹⁹. Das Publikum, an das sich Hieronymus wandte, waren nicht Schüler, die vor ihm saßen, sondern Leute, die weit weg im Westen des Römischen Reiches und vor allem in Rom wohnten. Hieronymus transferierte – im oben skizzierten Sinne – griechische Bibelkommentare an

113. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 61,2: ...*quae bona sunt, transtuli, et mala uel amputaui uel correxi uel tacui...*

114. *In Eph.*, praef. (11, zitiert oben in Anm. 108).

115. *In Gal.*, praef. (7, zitiert oben in Anm. 104).

116. Wenn keine griechischen Fragmente als Vergleichstexte vorliegen – und das ist nur in wenigen Fällen der Fall –, ist es daher sehr schwierig bis unmöglich herauszufinden, was Hieronymus originell zu der von ihm so ausgiebig benutzten griechischen Pauluskommentierung beigetragen hat. Siehe dazu auch L. PERRONE, *Questioni paoline nell'epistolario di Gerolamo*, in C. MORESCHINI – G. MENESTRINA (Hgg.), *Motivi letterari ed esegetici in Gerolamo*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1977, 81-103, S. 96-103.

117. Dass beide in der kirchlichen Hierarchie Presbyter waren, spielt für diese Texte übrigens keinerlei Rolle.

118. „Ständig liest oder schreibt er etwas“, beschrieb ihn Postumianus, der sich um 400 etwa ein halbes Jahr lang bei Hieronymus im Kloster zu Bethlehem aufhielt: Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* I,9,5. Zu Postumianus siehe FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 234-235.

119. Siehe dazu FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 20-21, ferner generell E.F. RICE, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, Baltimore, MD – London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 21988.

lateinische Leserinnen und Leser. Der gelehrte Mönch in Bethlechem verstand sich als Vermittler der griechischen (und jüdischen) Bibelgelehrsamkeit an den lateinischen Westen. In seinem letzten Kommentar, zum Propheten Jeremia, hat er sich im Alter selbst explizit so dargestellt: „Zufrieden lebe ich in der Ruhe und Abgeschiedenheit, die ich freiwillig gewählt habe, beschäftige mich mit der Auslegung der Heiligen Schriften und gebe die Bildung der Hebräer und der Griechen an die Menschen meiner Sprache weiter“¹²⁰. Aus derselben Perspektive hat er als junger Mann die Prologe zu seinen neutestamentlichen Kommentaren verfasst. Die Adressatenorientierung ist darin viel stärker, als wir sie in den Kommentarproömien des Origenes sehen, der lediglich seinen Mäzen Ambrosius ansprach¹²¹. Hieronymus tat dies ebenfalls, doch viel nachdrücklicher und ausführlicher, und zudem spielte er auf die kirchlichen Netzwerke an, in denen seine exegetische Tätigkeit angesiedelt war.

In allen Proömien zu den Paulinenkommentaren außer im ersten, dem zum Philemonbrief, werden Paula und ihre Tochter Eustochium als die Adressatinnen genannt, die ihn um die Abfassung dieser Kommentare gebeten hätten¹²². Zusätzlich wird öfter Marcella als diejenige genannt, die ihn dazu ebenfalls aufgefordert habe¹²³. Diese Namen stehen für den Kreis seiner Adressatinnen und wohl auch Adressaten in Rom, für die Hieronymus primär schrieb¹²⁴. Er war sich durchaus bewusst, dass seine Bücher von mehr Leuten gelesen wurden als von den angesprochenen Personen, wie aus der

120. Hieronymus, in *Hier.* III,1,2: ...*me optata quiete contentum scripturarum sanctarum explanationi insistere et hominibus linguae meae Hebraeorum Graecorumque eruditionem tradere...*

121. Origenes, *Clo* I,2,9; II,1,1; V,1,8; VI,2,6; XIII,1,1; XX,1,1; XXVIII,1,6; XXXII,1,2. Vgl. ferner *Orat* 2,1; 34; *EM* 1; 14; 36; 38; *Ep. ad Afric.* 24; *CC* prol. 1; III,1; IV,1; V,1; VI,1; VII,1; VIII,76. Siehe dazu A. MONACI CASTAGNO, *Origene e Ambrogio: L'indipendenza dell'intellettuale e le pretese del patronato*, in L. PERRONE (Hg.), *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition* (BETL, 164), Leuven, Leuven University Press – Peeters, 2003, 165-193; A. FÜRST, *Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion: Die Anfänge des Christentums in Alexandria* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, 213), Stuttgart, Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2007, S. 68-69.

122. Hieronymus, in *Gal.*, praef. (5); in *Gal.* II, praef. (80); in *Gal.* III, praef. (157); in *Eph.*, praef. (7); in *Eph.* II, praef. (53); in *Eph.* III, praef. (103); in *Tit.*, praef. (4). Hieronymus widmete diesen beiden Frauen zudem die Kommentare zu Kohelet (von 388/89) und zu den kleinen Propheten Nahum, Micha, Zephanja und Haggai (von 393), Eustochium alleine (nachdem Paula 404 gestorben war) die Kommentare zu Jesaja (verfasst 408-410) und Ezechiel (verfasst 410-414). Zu diesen beiden Frauen, von denen Paula die zentrale Rolle in seinem Leben spielte, siehe FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 189-190 bzw. S. 224-227 mit der dort verzeichneten Literatur.

123. Hieronymus, in *Gal.*, praef. (5); in *Eph.*, praef. (8); in *Eph.* II, praef. (53); in *Eph.* III, praef. (103). Marcella ist zudem (zusammen mit Pammachius) der Danielkommentar (von 407) gewidmet. Zu Marcella siehe FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 211-212 mit der dort verzeichneten Literatur, bes. S. LETSCH-BRUNNER, *Marcella – Discipula et Magistra: Auf den Spuren einer römischen Christin des 4. Jahrhunderts* (BZNW, 91), Berlin – New York, De Gruyter, 1998.

124. Siehe dazu FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 54-58, 75-79.

Notiz im Vorwort zum zweiten Buch des Epheserbriefkommentars: „wenn irgendwelche Leute dies lesen sollten“¹²⁵, hervorgeht. Und diese Leute befanden sich hauptsächlich in Rom. Aus diesem Grund wird Rom bisweilen erwähnt¹²⁶, auch als Bestimmungsort des Matthäuskommentars, der zwar Eusebius von Cremona gewidmet ist¹²⁷, in dessen Vorwort aber auch *Principia* aus dem Kreis römischer Frauen um Marcella erwähnt wird, an die eine Abschrift weiterzugeben Hieronymus dem Eusebius auftrug¹²⁸. Hieronymus hatte einen eminent praktischen Grund, seine römischen Adressatinnen so prononciert anzusprechen: Sie waren ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des sozialen Netzwerkes, das er für die Verbreitung seiner Schriften unbedingt benötigte. Aus diesem Grund gab er im Vorwort zum Epheserbriefkommentar auch genaue Anweisungen, an wen sie seine Kommentare *nicht* aushändigen sollten, nämlich an neiderfüllte Leute, die sich gelehrt und gebildet vorkommen, wenn sie andere herabsetzen¹²⁹.

Diese Hinweise auf seinen römischen Leserinnenkreis reichernte Hieronymus mit Reminiszenzen aus seinem Leben an und verlieh der an sich rein topischen Widmung an die Adressatinnen damit eine persönliche Färbung, die einerseits der Vergewisserung ihrer Verbundenheit diene, andererseits seiner Selbststilisierung als Autor. So stellte er den Galaterbriefkommentar zu Beginn des Vorworts als Trostschrift für Marcella hin: Wenige Tage, nachdem er den Kommentar zum Philemonbrief abgeschlossen und zum Galaterbrief übergegangen sei, habe ihn ein Brief aus „der Stadt“ (*urbs*), also Rom, erreicht, in dem ihm das Ableben von Marcellas Mutter Albina, einer weiteren Frau aus seinem römischen Kreis¹³⁰, mitgeteilt worden sei; auf Veranlassung von Paula und Eustochium solle er Marcella daher mit dem „Heilmittel der Schriften“ trösten¹³¹, wobei er nicht vergisst, diese Reminiszenz

125. Hieronymus, *in Eph.* II, praef. (53): *...si qui forte lecturi sunt....*

126. *In Gal.*, praef. (5); *in Eph.* II, praef. (53).

127. *In Matth.*, praef. (66). Außerdem ist Eusebius der (unvollendete) Jeremiakommentar (verfasst 414-416) gewidmet. Siehe zu ihm FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 188-189; R. LIZZI TESTA, *Eusebio di Cremona e Gerolamo: Dalla controversia origenista all'ultima comunione del santo*, in *Adamantius* 19 (2013) 69-83.

128. Hieronymus, *In Matth.*, praef. (70): *Vnde obsecro ut ... des exemplaria cum Romam ueneris uirgini Christi Principiae....* Zu *Principia* siehe FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 236.

129. Hieronymus, *in Eph.*, praef. (8): *Quamobrem obsecro tam uos quae impraesentiarum estis, quam sanctam Marcellam, unicum uiduitatis exemplar, ne facile maledicis et inuidis opuscula mea tradatis neue detis sanctum canibus et margaritas mittatis ante porcos (vgl. Matt 7,6), qui cum bona imitari non queant, quod solum facere possunt inuident et in eo se doctos eruditosque arbitrantur, si de aliis detrahant.* Siehe dazu CAIN, *Jerome's Pauline Commentaries* (Anm. 98), S. 104-105.

130. Zu Albina siehe FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 159 s.v. Albina 1.

131. Hieronymus, *in Gal.*, praef. (5): *Pauci admodum dies sunt quod epistulam Pauli ad Philemonem interpretatus ad Galatas transcenderam multis retrorsum in medio praetermissis, et ecce subito litterae mihi de Vrbe allatae sunt nuntiantes et Albinam, uenerabilem anum, praesentiae*

an seine Zeit in Rom mit einem Loblied auf Marcella zu verknüpfen¹³². Im Vorwort zum dritten Buch dieses Kommentars pflegt er diese Beziehungen in der Weise, dass er seine Adressatinnen an eine wichtige Entscheidung in seiner Biographie erinnert, nämlich seinen berühmten Entschluss infolge eines Traumes, keine paganen Schriftsteller mehr zu lesen¹³³. Das verbindet er mit einem Hinweis auf seine Hebräischstudien und auf seine körperlichen Gebrechen¹³⁴. Damit stellte Hieronymus nicht nur Nähe und Intimität mit seinen Adressatinnen her, sondern arbeitete auch an seiner Selbststilisierung: Er macht massiv Werbung dafür, ein ausgewiesener Experte für die exegetische und spirituelle Unterweisung so vorbildlicher Asketinnen wie Marcella und Paula zu sein¹³⁵. Einerseits gehört das erneut zu dem Bereich der Prolegomena, in denen der Autor über sich selbst, seine Arbeitsweise

Domini redditam et sanctam Marcellam, matris contubernio destitutam, magis nunc uestrum, o Paula et Eustochium, flagitare solacium et, quia hoc interim fieri non potest propter grandia maris in medio spatia atque terrarum, repente uulnus impressum saltem Scripturarum uelle curare medicamine. Zum Zweck des Kommentars, Trost zu spenden, siehe CAIN, *Commentary on Galatians* (Anm. 106), S. 17, 55-56.

132. In *Gal.*, praef. (5-6): *Scio equidem ardorem eius, scio fidem, quam flammam semper habeat in pectore, superare sexum, obliuisci hominis et diuinorum uoluminum tympano concrepante rubrum huius saeculi pelagus transfretare. Certe, cum Romae essem, numquam tam festina me uidit ut non de Scripturis aliquid interrogaret. Neque uero more pythagorico quicquid responderam rectum putabat, nec sine ratione praeiudicata apud eam ualebat auctoritas, sed examinabat omnia et sagaci mente uniuersa pensabat ut me sentirem non tam discipulam habere quam iudicem.* Wie auf Marcella hat Hieronymus auf viele dieser Frauen Nekrologe geschrieben – derjenige auf Marcella (*Ep.* 127 vom Jahr 410) ist Principia gewidmet –, in denen er sie als Ideale weiblicher Askese stilisierte, nicht zuletzt seine Lebensgefährtin Paula, deren Nekrolog (*Ep.* 108 vom Jahr 404) an ihre Tochter Eustochium adressiert ist. Siehe dazu B. FEICHTINGER, *Apostolae apostolorum: Frauenaskese als Befreiung und Zwang bei Hieronymus* (Studien zur klassischen Philologie, 94), Frankfurt a.M., Peter Lang, 1995; A. CAIN, *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

133. Hieronymus, in *Gal.* III, praef. (157-158): *Nostis enim et ipsae quod plus quam quindecim anni sunt ex quo in manus meas numquam Tullius, numquam Maro, numquam gentilium litterarum quilibet auctor ascendit; et si quid forte inde dum loquimur obrepat, quasi antiqui per nebulam somnii recordamur.* Vgl. *Ep.* 22,30 in dem berühmten Brief über die Jungfräulichkeit von 384, der an Eustochium adressiert ist (*Ep.* 22). Siehe dazu P. LAURENCE, *L'épître 22 de Jérôme et son temps*, in L. NADJO – É. GAVOILLE (Hgg.), *Actes du I^{er} colloque "Le genre épistolaire antique et ses prolongements"* (Université François-Rabelais, Tours, 18-19 septembre 1998) (Epistulae antiquae, 1), Leuven – Paris, Peeters, 2000, 63-83; FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 145-151.

134. Hieronymus, in *Gal.* III, praef. (157-158): *Sed omnem sermonis elegantiam et latini eloquii uenustatem stridor lectionis hebraicae sordidauit. ... Quid autem profecerim ex linguae illius infatigabili studio aliorum iudicio derelinquo: ego quid in mea amiserim scio. Accedit ad hoc quia propter oculorum et totius corpusculi infirmitatem manu mea ipse non scribo. ...* Zu den Hebräischkenntnissen des Hieronymus siehe FÜRST, *Hieronymus* (Anm. 14), S. 80-83, sowie die *ibid.*, S. 409-410 verzeichnete Literatur. Zu den häufigen Erkrankungen, auf die er auch im Vorwort zum Matthäuskommentar entschuldigend hinwies, siehe oben Anm. 70.

135. Siehe dazu CAIN, *Jerome's Pauline Commentaries* (Anm. 98), S. 102-104.

und seine Ziele und Absichten redet, andererseits aber auch zum Bescheidenheitstopos, der das eigentliche Thema dieses Vorworts ist. Der Hinweis auf seine körperlichen Gebrechen soll eventuelle Unzulänglichkeiten entschuldigen, doch trägt Hieronymus dabei so dick auf, dass man ihm das wörtlich Gesagte nicht abnimmt, sondern *e contrario* die Qualität seiner Arbeit betont wird. Auch das ist ein Unterschied zu Origenes: Dem Gelehrten in Caesarea nimmt man seine Bescheidenheit, die seit Pamphilus von Caesarea an ihm gerühmt wird¹³⁶, ab, dem Mönch in Bethlehem hingegen glaubt sie – zu Recht – niemand.

In diesen persönlichen Bemerkungen des Hieronymus über sich selbst als Autor kommen einige weitere Aspekte der wissenschaftlichen Prolegomena zur Sprache:

- Auseinandersetzung mit Gegnern und Vorgängern;
- Verteidigung oder Rechtfertigung der eigenen Arbeit;
- Umgang mit Quellen;
- Verfahrensweise beim Übersetzen;
- Selbststilisierung des Autors;
- Ziele und Absichten des Autors;
- Reminiszenzen aus seinem Leben;
- Bemerkungen zu den Adressaten des Kommentars und zum intendierten Leserkreis.

So viel also auch in den Vorworten zu seinen Paulinenkommentaren, was die Topik anbelangt, aus Origenes geschöpft sein mag, hat Hieronymus doch auch viel Eigenes aus seinem Lebenskontext hinzugefügt, wodurch sich seine Vorworte aufs Ganze gesehen in markanten Zügen von denen des Origenes unterscheiden. Sehr deutlich wird das im Vorwort zum Matthäusevangelium, das, geschrieben mitten im Streit um Origenes, diesen durchaus als Hauptquelle erwähnt, aber doch stark auf den Autor Hieronymus zugeschnitten ist.

IV. FAZIT

Die Aspekte, auf die Hieronymus in den Vorworten zu seinen neutestamentlichen Kommentaren eingeht, werden nicht schematisch abgehandelt. Nicht in allen Vorworten kommen alle Topoi zur Sprache; die meisten begegnen in den Vorworten zum Galater- und zum Epheserbriefkommentar.

136. Vgl. Pamphilus, *Apol. Orig.* 3-8.

Die traditionellen, auf gelehrte philologische Weise in den Text einführenden Topoi dürften weitgehend auf Origenes zurückgehen, doch auch diese präsentiert Hieronymus teilweise in eigener Gestaltung. Indem er diese Topoi zusätzlich mit seiner persönlichen Situation verknüpft, schafft er ausgesprochen lebendig gestaltete Proömien, die alles andere als trocken schulsystematisch daherkommen. Der literarische Gestaltungswille, durch den sich alle Texte des Hieronymus auszeichnen, ist auch in diesen Proömien erkennbar, auch wenn er einen Großteil des Materials dafür mehr oder weniger direkt von Origenes übernommen haben dürfte. Dieses spezifische Merkmal seiner Proömientechnik, mit dem er sich von allen anderen patristischen Bibelauslegern unterscheidet, taucht erstmals in seinen neutestamentlichen Kommentaren zum Philemon-, Galater-, Epheser- und Titusbrief auf (und auch später im Vorwort zum Matthäuskommentar). In seinen weiteren Kommentaren zu alttestamentlichen Büchern und auch in den Vorworten zu seiner Bibelübersetzung aus dem Hebräischen ist er ebenso vorgegangen und hat diese Merkmale, da er sich gegen zahlreiche Kritiken verteidigen musste, sogar noch ausgebaut¹³⁷. Auf diese Weise hat er schulische Konventionen, die ursprünglich im griechischen Philosophieunterricht beheimatet waren und zu seiner Zeit zum Standard der griechischen Bibelauslegung gehörten, der lateinischsprachigen Welt vermittelt und die Prolegomena zu einem nach den Maßstäben der Spätantike wissenschaftlichen Kommentar in einer literarisch ausgesprochen lebendigen und attraktiven Form im lateinischen Westen etabliert.

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137. Gezeigt von A. CAIN, *Apology and Polemic in Jerome's Prefaces to His Biblical Scholarship*, in BIRNBAUM – SCHWIENHORST-SCHÖNBERGER (Hgg.), *Hieronymus als Exeget und Theologe* (Anm. 21), 107-128. Siehe ferner ID., *Polemic, Patronage, and Memories of Rome in the Prefaces to Jerome's Pauline Commentaries*, in I. SCHAAF (Hg.), *Hieronymus Romanus: Studies on Jerome and Rome on the Occasion of the 1600th Anniversary of His Death* (Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia, 87), Turnhout, Brepols, 2021 (im Druck); und ID., *Jerome's Commentaries on the Pauline Epistles and the Architecture of Exegetical Authority*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, Kap. 2 (im Druck).

GRAMMAR AT THE SERVICE OF PASTORAL ACTIVITY

AUGUSTINE'S INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 17,21

I. THE ISSUE OF EXACTITUDE

In commenting on Psalm 44 Augustine writes,

What the tongue says, makes sound and passes away. What is written, though, remains. When therefore God speaks the Word, and the Word spoken does not make a sound and pass away but is spoken and remains, God prefers to compare this to written words than to sounds¹.

According to Michael C. McCarthy², the phrase promotes the pre-eminence of the written word over the spoken one. Generally speaking, such a position is not new in ancient Christianity; in fact, it can easily be regarded as part of a longstanding trend that increasingly gave more authority to the written witnesses of Jesus' life and ministry rather than to oral traditions³. This movement is paired with the progressive entry of exegesis in theological debates, so much so that Mark DelCogliano rightly states

1. Augustine, *en. Ps.* 44.6 (CCSL 38, 498,15-18); transl. in M.C. MCCARTHY, "We Are Your Books": Augustine, the Bible and the Practice of Authority, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75 (2007) 324-352, p. 330.

2. MCCARTHY, "We Are Your Books" (n. 1), pp. 330-331.

3. The issue in question is broader and still debated. Against H.Y. GAMBLE, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts*, New Haven, CT – London, Yale University Press, 1995, p. 24, who states that "Christians were deeply and continuously engaged with texts", R.E. BROWN, in *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2010, argues that from its very beginning Jesus' message did not rely on written texts, and only later were the gospels were compiled. According to Brown, the redaction of narratives on Jesus' life was caused by the necessity of preserving memories of the Lord after the death of the eyewitnesses. Alternatively, Gamble does not consider the emergence of written texts as a complete sea change, but as a "development within a tradition already well accustomed to the written word". Even the often quoted Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.3-4, would prove just "the longevity and authority of oral tradition in the early church alongside a parallel authority of the written texts, and not the greater credit of the oral testimony" (GAMBLE, *Books and Readers*, p. 30; see also F.M. YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 15).

that in the third and fourth century “theology was fundamentally an exegetical endeavour”⁴.

Along these lines, this paper focuses on Augustine’s treatment of John 17,21 as a meaningful case study for testing this hypothesis. In addition, Augustine’s reading of this verse allows scholars to overcome the usual “allegorical *vs* literal” scheme and to focus on the key role grammatical analysis and rhetoric play in reading ambiguous New Testament passages that remained malleable to different interpretations (as the Arian controversy clearly evidenced)⁵.

John 17,21 reads as follows: “That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me”. The history of its reception is complex and multi-faceted. Proceeding backwards from contemporary to past exegesis, the most recent commentaries agree on some topics and dissent on others. Several scholars concur in stating that the unity among the believers relies on the unity between the Father and the Son, as the gospel says. However, the question of the nature of this unity remains open, despite the intense debate concerning its ecumenical implication that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s⁶.

4. M. DELCOGLIANO, *The Interpretation of John 10:30 in the Third Century: Antimonarchian Polemics and the Rise of Grammatical Reading Techniques*, in *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 6 (2012) 117-138, p. 117; see also S. PARVIS, *Christology in the Early Arian Controversy: The Exegetical War*, in A.T. LINCOLN – A. PADDISON (ed.), *Christology and Scripture. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London – New York, T&T Clark, 2008, 120-137, p. 120: “it is a matter of how Scripture is best to be interpreted. The protagonists take pericopes, phrases, often simply individual words, and ponder the light they shed on the being of Christ”.

5. YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis* (n. 3), p. 241: “The advent of scholarship meant that the now traditional Christian ways of interpreting the Bible, forged first in confessional and apologetic use of the scriptures, were taken up into more systematic scholarly exegesis. Grammatical and explanatory comment entered the exegetical process more formally. The ‘school’ context became important, and school methods were introduced”.

6. Just some examples: R. MATZERATH, *The Prayer of Christ for Unity: St. John 17: 20-23*, Roma, Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1950; J. CADIER, *The Unity of the Church: An Exposition of John 17*, in *Interpretation* 11 (1957) 166-176; T.E. POLLARD, “*That They All May Be One*” (*John xvii 21*) – and the Unity of the Church, in *Expository Times* 70 (1958-1959) 149-150; J.-L. D’ARAGON, *La notion johannique de l’unité*, in *Sciences Ecclesiastiques* 11 (1959) 111-119; M. VILLAIN, *La prière de Jésus pour l’unité chrétienne. Méditation œcuménique sur Jean, XVII*, Paris, Casterman, 1960; J. DUPONT, *La preghiera di Gesù per l’unità dei cristiani (Giov. 17,11.20-23)*, in *Parole di vita* 10 (1965) 321-336; J.F. RANDALL, *The Theme of Unity in John xvii 20-23*, in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 41 (1965) 373-394; B. HÄRING, *This Time of Salvation*, transl. A. Swidler, New York, Herder and Herder, 1966; B. BOBRINSKY, *Fondements théologiques de la prière commune pour l’unité*, in *Verbum Caro* 21 (1967) 14-31; D.A. BLACK, *On the Style and Significance of John 17*, in *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (1988) 141-159.

When the focus moves to the earliest treatment of the Johannine farewell discourse, it is noteworthy to observe that the most challenged aspect of John 17,21 – namely, the use of the neuter ἕν to express the divine and earthly unity – completely disappears in the Johannine epistles⁷ and only gradually surfaces in patristic sources both as a literal reference and as a question of concern. The first quotation of the verse is found in Clement of Alexandria, who introduces his discussion of John 17,21 with the formal marker λόγων τὴν εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ κυρίου ... φωνήν⁸. The passage reveals not only the unusual presence of this Johannine verse in a discourse on the goodness and righteousness of God, but also, for the first time, a certain accurateness in quoting Jesus' prayer for unity, even without mentioning John. Clement demonstrates that he knows the exact words of the verse, but he does not care to mention his source with the same accuracy.

This is only one of the many difficulties in retracing use of John 17,21. In fact, readers run the risk of interpreting any reference to unity, to the divine/human mutual indwelling, and to the return of the many to the One, as if they were of Johannine origin, unless they consider how popular and common these themes and motifs were in late antiquity⁹.

7. Even though there is no agreement among scholars about the dating of the gospel and the epistles, it is not completely wrong to state that, in both cases, the Johannine epistles are the "earliest reception of the Gospel"; see T. RASIMUS, *Introduction*, in ID. (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (SupplNT, 132), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2010, pp. 2-3; and R. HAKOLA, *The Reception and Development of the Johannine Tradition in 1, 2 and 3 John*, *ibid.*, 17-47. According to D. WENHAM, *Paradigms and Possibilities in the Study of John's Gospel*, in J. LIERMAN (ed.), *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (WUNT, 219), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2006, 1-13, pp. 6-7, the onset of the ἀντιχριστοί caused an increase of the references to the themes of μένειν, of mutual love, and of κοινωνία in the Johannine epistles. On the disappearance of the indwelling motif, see HAKOLA, *The Reception*, p. 25: "the epistles lack the idea of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son that forms a foundation for the indwelling of the believers in God in the gospel (John 14:10-11,20; 17:21). Judith Lieu is right in concluding that the language of indwelling is 'both more structured and more restrained' in the gospel than in 1 John which 'does not exhibit the discipline of the Gospel'; and also J. LIEU, *I, II and III John: A Commentary* (The New Testament Library), Louisville, KY, Westminster, John Knox, 2008, p. 73.

8. Clement, *Paed.* 1.71.1 (GCS 12, 131.11-19, here 12-13). On marking quotations, see A.F. GREGORY – C.M. TUCKETT, *Reflections on Method: What Constitutes the Use of the Writings That Later Formed the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers?*, in IID. (eds.), *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, 61-82, p. 66.

9. In particular, second-century literature appears to be characterised by "a blend of older traditions and sources, free materials, and influence from those gospels that later became canonical" (H. KOESTER, *Gospels and Gospel Traditions in the Second Century*, in A.F. GREGORY – C.M. TUCKETT [eds.], *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, 27-44, p. 34). Just as the term Λόγος, whose presence does not necessarily mark a distinctive Johannine influence, so also the terms

Furthermore, it must be noted that the contemporary concern for the earthly unity for which Jesus prays in John 17,21 is just one of the many details the Fathers highlight in their interpretation of the verse. Beside Clement's exegesis, three main interpretive tendencies can be traced. A limited group of authors express interest in the Johannine claim for the earthly, concrete unity of believers¹⁰, while many interpretations revolve around two different foci. Origen, among others, emphasises the eschatological nuance of John 17,21, linking the Johannine εὖν with the human desire to restore its original oneness with God¹¹. Simultaneously, beginning with the *Contra Noëtum*, early Christian biblical scholars tend to stress just one part of the verse, i.e., "as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us", in order to provide a scriptural basis for the debate on the relationship between the Father and the Son and his divinity. Therefore, the presence of this passage should not be considered unintentional or insignificant. To the contrary, the "orthodox" presentations of "heterodox" doctrines – and *vice versa* – are evidence of a lively and detailed debate on this Johannine text¹².

Augustine's exegesis is part of this larger trajectory, but it presents some unique features. First, it reflects his personal approach to Scripture, which moved from an initial rejection¹³ to conversion to the biblical text. However,

related to the indwelling or oneness themes cannot be understood as distinctly Johannine. For example, the unity theme is frequent in the *Gospel of Thomas*, but despite of some assured literary connections with the Gospel of John, the dependence upon Platonic motifs cannot be underestimated.

10. See Cyprian, *domin. orat.* 30 (CCSL 3A, 108.545–109.561); Jerome, *adv. Iovin.* 2.19 (PL 23, 327C–328C); 2.28–29 (338C–339A; 339B; 340A–B; 340C; 341A); Basil, *jud.* 3–4 (PG 31, 657C–661A); *reg. brev.* 183 (1204C–1205A); *moral.* 60 (793A–796A).

11. Origenes, *Prin* 1.6.2 (GCS 22, 82.5–19); 2.3.5 (120.17–29); 3.6.1 (280.10–281.5); 6.6 (287.21–288.4); *HGn* 1.13 (GCS 29, 17.1–26); *HIos* 17.2 (GCS 30, 403.25–404.2); *CIo* 1.26.173–174 (GCS 10, 32.14–27); *HNm* 21.3 (GCS 30, 203.7–25); *CRm* 5.9 (ed. BAMMEL, 435.77–83); *CCt* 1.4.9 (SC 375, 224).

12. For the very first polemical use of John 17,21, see *Noët.* 7 (ed. SIMONETTI, 164.166), and Origenes, *CC* 8.2 (GCS 3, 229.10–230.4). During the Arian controversy, it was appealed to regularly. Just some examples: Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 3.18–20 (GCS 14, 179.9–181.11); Athanasius, *C. Ar.* 2.42 (ed. METZLER, 218.1–219.25); *C. Ar.* 3.20 (329.1–330.28); Hilary, *Trin.* 8.10–11 (CCSL 62A, 321.1–323.23); 8.18 (329.1–330.1).

13. Augustine, *Conf.* 3.5.9 (CCSL 27, 30.38–31.10): *Itaque institui animum intendere in Scripturas sanctas et uidere, quales essent. Et ecce uideo rem non compertam superbis neque nudatam pueris, sed incesso humilem, successu excelsam et uelatam mysteriis, et non eram ego talis, ut intrare in eam possem aut inclinare ceruicem ad eius gressus. Non enim sicut modo loquor, ita sensi, cum attendi ad illam Scripturam, sed uisa est mihi indigna, quam tullianae dignitati compararem. Tumor enim meus refugiebat modum eius et acies mea non penetrabat interiora eius. Verum autem illa erat, quae cresceret cum paruulis, sed ego dedignabar esse paruulus et turgidus fastu mihi grandis uidebar.* After reading Plato, Augustine took a new approach to Paul, which led him to overcome the discrepancies between the Old and the New Testament; see *Conf.* 7.21.27

as two of his letters clearly indicate¹⁴, his progress was slow and troubled. Scripture appears gradually and slowly in Augustine's prose and, at the very beginning of his career as an exegete, he requires some hermeneutical tools to familiarise himself with a text that he considered difficult and inellegant¹⁵. Moreover, he faces a dichotomy between the fixity of the divine word and its potentially unlimited interpretations and meanings¹⁶, a dichotomy that is particularly appropriate not only in the case of John 17,21. To solve the issue, Augustine "took his splendid secular education and applied it to the Bible"¹⁷.

II. THE *DE CONSENSU EVANGELISTARUM* BETWEEN BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND A BISHOP'S AUTHORITY

Augustine's interpretation of John 17,21 starts with a concise reference in the *De consensu evangelistarum*, composed shortly after 402-403 according to Pierre-Marie Hombert¹⁸. The effort to harmonise the four canonical gospels is not a purely scholarly interest and it is not just a peculiarity of Augustine¹⁹.

(110.28-6): *Itaque auidissime arripui uenerabilem stilum spiritus tui et prae ceteris apostolum Paulum, et perierunt illae quaestiones, in quibus mihi aliquando uisus est aduersari sibi et non congruere testimonis legis et prophetarum textus sermonis eius, et apparuit mihi una facies eloquiorum castorum, et exultare cum tremore didici.*

14. Augustine, *Ep.* 21 (CSEL 34¹, 49.6-54.6), in particular, 21.3 (51.3-20); 6 (53.20-54.2); and *Ep.* 29 (114.1-122.24); see also *Retract.* 1.7.2 (CCSL 57, 18.9-22).

15. See I. BOCHET, "*Le firmament de l'Écriture*": *L'herméneutique augustinienne* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 172), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2004, p. 39: "On comprend alors le rôle spécifique de l'Écriture: elle est essentiellement un remède, comme l'Incarnation. L'orgueil a faussé l'exercice de l'intelligence; la reconnaissance de l'autorité de l'Écriture, qui suppose l'humilité, devient alors le remède approprié qui rendra à l'homme la capacité de reconnaître Dieu, à travers le créé, par son intelligence. L'*auctoritas* des Écritures ne se substitue pas à la *ratio*, elle la purifie et la redresse".

16. See Augustine, *Conf.* 12.18.27 (229.1-230.18); 6.5.7 (78.19-25). MCCARTHY, "*We Are Your Books*" (n. 1), p. 328.

17. J.T. LIENHARD, *Reading the Bible and Learning to Read: The Influence of Education on St Augustine's Exegesis*, in *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996) 7-25, p. 9.

18. Studying the chronology of Augustine's works, P.-M. HOMBERT, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 163), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000, p. 73, noted that the quotations of John 17,21 appear only in Augustine's later writings.

19. As Éric Junod demonstrated, the fourth century attests the flourishing of a new literary genre, i.e. the complete lists of the books of the Old and New Testament, paired with codices that contained the same texts; see É. JUNOD, *D'Eusèbe de Césarée à Athanase d'Alexandrie en passant par Cyrille de Jérusalem: De la construction savante du Nouveau Testament à la clôture ecclésiastique du canon*, in G. ARAGIONE – É. JUNOD – E. NORELLI (eds.), *Le canon du Nouveau*

When asserting that the four evangelists “do not stand in any antagonism to each other”²⁰, he is supported by a tradition dating back to Irenaeus or even Justin Martyr²¹. But above all, he turns to those brethren, who “without detriment to their own faith, have a desire to ascertain what answer can be given to such questions, either for the advantage of their own knowledge or for the purpose of refuting the vain utterances of their enemies”²². He explains the nature of his aim: polemics, scholarly edification, philological attention to the texts, and catechesis²³. It is also likely that his pastoral responsibilities pushed Augustine to return to the ambiguities and complexities of the biblical text based on his first-hand experiences.

Augustine refers to John 17,21 in the last part of the work, comparing the Synoptics with John. He then deals with the peculiarities of the Fourth Gospel, focusing on the account of the Last Supper²⁴:

Thereafter, in connection with the Supper itself, of which none of the evangelists has failed to give us some notice, how affluent and how lofty are those words of Jesus which John records, but which the others have passed over in silence! I may instance not only His commendation of humility, when He washed the disciples’ feet, but also that marvellously overpowering and pre-eminently copious discourse which the Lord delivered to the eleven who remained with Him after His betrayer had been indicated by the morsel of bread, and had gone out. It was in this discourse, over which John lingers long, that He said, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also”²⁵. It was in it, too, that He expressed Himself so largely about the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, whom He was to send to them, and about His own glory, which He had with the

Testament: Regards nouveaux sur l'histoire de sa formation, Genève, Labor et Fides, 2005, 169-195. While compiling these lists, bishops as Cyril and Athanasius did not show only their scholarly interests in attesting the reception of certain “canonical” books in some areas of the empire (see, in contrast, Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.25), but especially their authoritative concern to pronounce a definitive ecclesiastical statement on the truly inspired books.

20. Augustine, *cons. evang.* 1.7.10 (ed. F. WEIHRICH; CSEL 43, 11.12-13), transl. S.D.F. SALMOND, in P. SCHAFF (ed.), *St. Augustin. Sermon on the Mount; Harmony of the Gospels; Homilies on the Gospels* (Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, I.6), Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1974, p. 81.

21. See R.A. PIPER, *The One, the Four and the Many*, in M. BOCKMUEHL – D.A. HAGNER (eds.), *The Written Gospel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 254-273, pp. 270-271.

22. Augustine, *cons. evang.* 1.7.10 (11.2-7), transl. SALMOND, in SCHAFF (ed.), *St. Augustin. Sermon* (n. 20), p. 81.

23. P. DE LUIS, *Introduzione*, in *Sant’Agostino: Il consenso degli evangelisti* (Opere di Sant’Agostino, 10/1), Roma, Città Nuova, 1996, p. xxx: “Al pastore interessa più istruire alcuni che confutare altri, sebbene le due cose vadano di pari passo”.

24. Augustine, *cons. evang.* 4.10.19 (415.2-6): *Donec inde illis occurreret ad passionis tempus, quod cum eis erat necessario narraturus, ubi tamen ipsam dominicam cenam, de qua nullus eorum tacuit, multo opulentiùs tamquam de cellario dominici pectoris, ubi discumbere solebat, exhibuit.*

25. John 14,9.

Father before the world was, and about His making us one in Himself, even as He and the Father are one, – not that He and the Father and we should be one, but that we should be one as they are one²⁶.

Paraphrasing John 17,21, Augustine emphasises the difference between the unity among the believers and the oneness which characterises the two divine Persons (*non ut ipse et Pater et nos unum, sed nos unum sicut ipsi unum*²⁷). The *unum* of the believers does not share the same nature with the *unum* of the Father and the Son, but it is shaped after the latter. The analysis of the other passages reveals that this cursory mention hides a more complex and structured reflection.

III. EXEGETICAL STRUGGLES: AUGUSTINE AND THE ARIANS

Augustine develops his meditation on the expression of unity in John 17,21 in a group of minor works (the *Ep.* 238, and the diptych of the *Colatio cum Maximino* and the *Contra Maximinum*), in which his interpretation is set in a more defined context. *Ep.* 238 focuses on the issue of the ὁμοούσιον, while the two other texts testify to an actual debate with the Arian bishop Maximinus. Why does the bishop of Hippo return to apparently resolved disputes? In his *Introduction* to the Italian edition of Augustine's anti-Arians works, Enrico Peroli emphasises that the specificity of the African context is key for understanding this move. Although the controversy was waning in other parts of the empire, it came again to the forefront in Africa because of the increasing presence of barbarian troops many of whom were Arians, a situation that even resulted in new conversions²⁸.

Augustine's writings against the Arians are few in comparison to those devoted to confuting the Manicheans, the Donatists, and the Pelagians.

26. Augustine, *cons. evang.* 4.10.19 (413.23–414.12): *Deinde in ipsa cena, de qua euangelistarum nullus tacuit, quam multa et quam excelsa uerba eius Iohannes commemorat, quae alii tacuerunt! Non solum de commendatione humilitatis, quando pedes discipulorum lauit, sed, cum expressus per buccellam traditor eius exisset, remanentibus cum illo undecim, in sermone ipsius mirabiliter stupendo maximeque diurno idem Iohannis inmoratus est, ubi dixit: 'qui uidit me, uidit et Patrem'. Vbi multa locutus est de Spiritu Sanctu, paraclito, quem missurus eis erat, et de sua clarificatione, quam habuit apud Patrem, priusquam mundus esset, et quod unum nos faceret in se, sicut ipse et Pater unum sunt, non ut ipse et Pater et nos unum, sed nos unum sicut ipsi unum;* transl. SALMOND, in SCHAFF (ed.), *St. Augustin. Sermon* (n. 20), p. 233.

27. Augustine, *cons. evang.* 4.10.19 (414.12).

28. E. PEROLI, in *Sant'Agostino. Opere antiariane. Un discorso di parte ariana. Contro un discorso di parte ariana. Conferenza con Massimino. Polemica con Massimino* (Opere di Sant'Agostino, 12/2), Roma, Città Nuova, 2000, p. VIII; see also M. SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino e gli Ariani*, in *REAug* 1 (1967) 55–84, p. 68.

However, as Manlio Simonetti has noted, these writings deserve attention both because they transmit primary sources relating to fifth-century Western Arianism and because they are a touchstone for verifying Augustine's relationship to tradition and for identifying his own innovations²⁹.

The *Letter to Pascentius* (*Ep.* 238) is the first of a group of four letters whose main character, Pascentius, *comes domus regiae*, was in debate with Augustine between 404 and 411, according to Possidius³⁰. First, the text relates how the public discussion took place³¹; then, it centres on the examination of the term ὁμοούσιον³², since Pascentius forced Augustine to point him out all the biblical passages which contain the word in question³³. The bishop of Hippo openly declares that he cannot advance any evidence from Scripture³⁴, and he indeed tries to avoid the most debated theological expressions³⁵. However, the profession of faith expressed by Augustine in the letter aims to demonstrate how Scripture, even without using the term itself, articulates the concept.

The New Testament proof texts used by Augustine are familiar to the Arian controversy: John 10,30; 14,28; 1 Tim 1,17; 6,16; 1 Cor 16,16-17, and Acts 4,32. Following the Origenian method of finding the *πρόσωπον* in Scripture, he establishes some criteria for defining when the text refers to

29. SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), pp. 55-56.

30. Possidius, *Vita Aug.* 17; however, scholars note that the information of Augustine's biographer has not been considered to be reliable, and they propose a different dating. See W. LÖHR, *Augustine's Correspondence with Pascentius* (epp. 238-241) – *An Epistolary Power Game*, in *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques* 62 (2016) 183-222, pp. 184-187.

31. Pascentius, in fact, refused to have his profession of faith registered by the stenographers (Augustine, *Ep.* 238.1.2 [CSEL 57, 533.13–534.2]); then, after the debate, he probably boasted victory over Augustine (Augustine, *Ep.* 238.1.8 [538.2–539.7]). For the structure of the texts, see LÖHR, *Augustine's Correspondence* (n. 30), p. 195: "It launches straightaway into, first, a partisan *narratio* of the disputation and its sudden end (cc. 1-9), and then continues with an *argumentatio* (cc. 10-25) which presents and defends Augustine's own trinitarian creed. Cc. 26-27 form the peroration, cc. 28-29 are an addendum on the question of whether the *homoousios* is scriptural or not. The letter (both *narratio* and *argumentatio*) is meant to refute Pascentius' claim that Augustine was responsible for the ending of the disputation because he did not wish to declare his faith".

32. Augustine maliciously alludes to his opponent's suspected heresy: Augustine, *Ep.* 238.1.4 (535.2-13).

33. Vd. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.1.4 (535.13–536.4); see LÖHR, *Augustine's Correspondence* (n. 30), p. 190.

34. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.1.5 (536.16-20): *Sic ergo et ὁμοούσιον, quod in auctoritate diuinorum librorum cogebamur ostendere, etiamsi uocabulum ipsum non ibi inueniamus. Fieri posse, ut illud inueniamus, cui hoc uocabulum recte adhibitum iudicetur.*

35. LÖHR, *Augustine's Correspondence* (n. 30), p. 200: "With this text, Augustine articulates his Nicene faith without mentioning the Nicene watchwords of *homoousios* and *ek tês ousia tou patros*. In this way he demonstrates that the content of Nicene faith is not dependent on those particular terms. At the close of the letter he will, however, return to the *homousios* and argue that the thing it designates is present in the bible".

Jesus' divinity³⁶, to his humanity³⁷, or to the Holy Trinity³⁸. Additionally, the early community in Jerusalem, described in Acts 4,32³⁹, foreshadows the future and eternal unity of the believers with the Father and the Son⁴⁰.

Augustine concludes his statement of faith by urging Pascentius to demonstrate "whether the divine Scripture says anywhere of different substances that they are one"⁴¹. However, he does not want to leave the last word to his adversary and gives his personal answer:

Do not, therefore, try to see how a victory can be won over Augustine, who is only one man, such as he is, but see, rather, whether a victory can be won over *homoousion*, not the mere Greek word which can easily raise a laugh among the unintelligent, but that doctrine which is expressed thus: "I and the Father are one"⁴², and: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we also are one"⁴³. And, likewise, a little further on He says: "Not for them only do I pray but for them also who through their word shall believe in me; that they all may be one as thou, Father, in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them that they may be one as we also are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"⁴⁴. Notice that as often as He says: "that they may

36. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.2.10 (540.17).

37. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.2.10 (540.14, 18).

38. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.2.11 (541.3-11): *Si enim de carne diuersi sexus dictum est: 'Qui adhaeret meretrici, unum corpus est' (1 Cor 6,16) et de spiritu hominis, qui non est, quod Dominus, consequenter scriptum est: 'Qui autem adhaeret domino, unus spiritus est' (1 Cor 6,17), quanto magis Deus Pater in Filio et Deus Filius in Patre et Spiritus Patris et Filii unus Deus est, ubi nulla est diuersa natura. Cum ex diuersis modo quodam sibi cohaerentibus dicatur uel spiritus unus uel corpus unum!*; also 238.2.12 (541.24-542.1).

39. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.2.13 (542.19-20): *diuersitates uoluntatum et sententiarum et opinionum morumque dissimilitudines.*

40. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.2.13 (542.16-543.4): *Illi enim homines per consortium et communionem unius eiusdemque naturae, qua omnes homines erant, unum erant, etsi aliquando secundum diuersitates uoluntatum et sententiarum et opinionum morumque dissimilitudines non erant unum; erunt autem plene perfecteque unum, cum peruentum fuerit ad eum finem, 'ut sit deus omnia in omnibus' (1 Cor 15,28). Deus autem Pater et Filius eius, Verbum eius, Deus apud Deum, semper atque ineffabiliter unum sunt, unde magis non duo dii sed unus Deus;* see also 238.2.16 (545.21-546.2); LÖHR, *Augustine's Correspondence* (n. 30), p. 202: "The unity of the adopted children of God and coheirs of Christ among each other (Rom 8,17, 1 Cor 13,13, Acts 4,32, 1 Cor 15,28) is less than the unity between Father and Son: As Father and Son do, the Christians share the same human nature, but because of diverse opinions and will, the Christians are not yet perfectly united. However, they will reach this perfect oneness in the end, when God will be all in all (1 Cor 15,28)".

41. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.4.25 (552.22-553.1), transl. W. PARSONS, in H. DRESSLER (ed.), *Saint Augustine. Letters, volume V (204-270)* (The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, 32), Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 1956, p. 206.

42. John 10,30.

43. John 17,11.

44. John 17,20-23.

be one”, He does not at any time say: “that they and we may be one”, but: “as thou and I are one so they also may be one in us”, because, as they whom He wished to make partakers of one eternal life were of one and the same substance, so it is said of the Father and the Son: “We are one”, because they are of one and the same substance and they are not partakers of eternal life, but they are pre-eminently eternal life itself. According to the form of servant, He could have said: “I and they are one”, or “We are one”, but He did not say that because He wished to show that His and the Father’s substance was not the same as theirs. If He had said: “that thou and they may be one as thou and I are one”, or: “that thou and I and they may be one as I and thou are one”, no one of us would refuse to admit the possibility of saying “they are one” even of different substances. But now you see how that is not so, because He did not say so, and by often repeating what He said He called it strongly to our attention⁴⁵.

Even if the term ἑμoὐςoιον might be easily misunderstood, John 10,30 and 17,11.20-23 show the Son openly declaring his oneness (*unum*) with the Father.

To prevent any objection, Augustine’s answer analyses Jesus’ words according to the interpretive rules of the *grammaticus*. It is not possible to apply slavishly to this passage the three-fold schema (*praelectio, lectio, enarratio*) described by George Lawless⁴⁶. One reason for this is because the discourse

45. Augustine, *Ep.* 238.5.28 (554.15–555.21): *Noli ergo adtendere, quo modo uincatur Augustinus qualiscumque unus homo, sed adtende potius, utrum uinci possit ἑμoὐςoιον non ipsam uerbum Graecum, quod facile est non intelligentibus inridere, sed illud, quod scriptum est: ‘Ego et pater unum sumus’ et: ‘Pater sancte serua eos in nomine tuo, quos dedisti mihi, ut sint unum sicut et nos’. Item paulo post: ‘Non pro his autem rogo tantum, inquit, sed et pro eis, qui credituri sunt pro uerbum eorum in me, ut omnes unum sint sicut tu, pater, in me et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut mundus credat, quia tu me misisti. et ego claritatem, quam dedisti mihi, dedi illis, ut sint unum, sicut nos unum sumus ego in eis et tu in me, ut sint consummati in unum’. Vide, quotiens dixit ‘sint unum, sicut et nos unum sumus’, nusquam tamen dixit ‘ipsi et nos sumus unum’ sed ‘sicut ego et tu sumus unum, sic et ipsi in nobis sint unum’, quia, sicut illi erant unius eiusdemque substantiae, quos etiam unius participationis uitae aeternae facere uolebat, ita de Patre et Filio propterea dictum est: ‘Unum sumus’, quia unius sunt eiusdemque substantiae et non participes uitae aeternae sed ipsa principaliter uita aeterna. et poterat dicere secundum formam serui ‘ego et ipsi unum sumus’ aut ‘unum simus’: nec hoc tamen dixit, quia unam substantiam Patris et suam et unam illorum uolebat ostendere. Si autem dixisset ‘et tu et ipsi unum sitis, sicut et ego et tu unum sumus’ aut ‘et tu et ego et ipsi unum simus, sicut et ego et tu unum sumus’, nemo nostrum recusaret posse dici ‘unum sunt’ etiam diuersas substantias. nunc autem uidet, quam non ita sit, quia non ita dixit et saepe dicendo uehementer commendauit, quod dixit, transl. PARSONS, in DRESSLER (ed.), *Saint Augustine* (n. 41), pp. 208-209.*

46. G. LAWLESS, *Augustine’s Use of Rhetoric in His Interpretation of John 21:19-23*, in *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992) 53-67, p. 54: “1) *praelectio*, an explanatory reading of the text by the *grammaticus*; 2) *lectio/commendatio*, an examination by the preacher of the words of the text, apart from their context (*uorborum interpretatio*), then a critical evaluation of everything that is reported in the passage (*historiarum cognitio*); 3) *enarratio/expositio*, a contextual reworking of the entire passage”. See also H.-I. MARROU, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Paris, De Boccard, 1938, p. 424: “Aussi ne faut-il pas s’étonner si, à ce premier niveau, l’exégèse augustiniennne apparaît essentiellement comme une exégèse grammaticale, si

is divided into two parts: the precise and lengthy Johannine quotations and three different hypotheses. Here, Augustine's interest in what Jesus could have said reveals what Jesus really said, disclosing both his divinity and his unity with the Father⁴⁷ and the constitutive difference between humans and God. To achieve this aim, Augustine employs a device which Frances M. Young characterised as "deductive exegesis". This process "involves attention to the meaning of words, their particular biblical sense, the syntax and the context of the text in question – the basic techniques of the grammaticus attending to the verbal configuration of a passage"⁴⁸. In the passage above, the words of the gospel are slightly modified to create a new quotation but with the same meaning of the original text. Thus, the exegete focuses his readers' attention on the correct meaning of the sentence, by comparing the new text with the words that Jesus may have spoken⁴⁹.

The *Collatio cum Maximino* and the *Contra Maximinum* witness to a dispute between Augustine and Maximinus. The encounter, which took place in 427–428 according to Possidius⁵⁰, occurred in the presence of many distinguished personalities and stenographers recorded the statements of the two contenders⁵¹. The report demonstrates that Maximinus monopolised the scene⁵², not allowing Augustine to answer. For his part, the bishop of Hippo decided to draw up a written answer in order to prove that "you (Maximinus) have tried to prove by true divine testimonies your own false teachings"⁵³.

elle ne fait qu'adapter au cas particulier de la Bible les précédés traditionnels des écoles antiques: *lectio, emendatio, enarratio*".

47. LÖHR, *Augustine's Correspondence* (n. 30), p. 205. Cf. H.A.G. HOUGHTON, *Augustine's Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 51: "Augustine describes one of his key exegetical principles as the *regula sana catholica* ('sound catholic rule'; Tractatus in Iohannem 18.2): when interpreting texts concerning Christ, it is necessary to determine to which of his two natures they apply, the divine or the human. A common shorthand way of expressing this is to take Philippians 2:6–7 as a hermeneutic principle, enabling material to be categorised as *forma dei* ('in the form of God') or *forma serui* ('in the form of a servant'). In the Gospel according to John, with its varied expressions of the relationship of the Father to the Son, this distinction is frequently invoked by Augustine in order to maintain scriptural unity". See also LIENHARD, *Reading the Bible* (n. 17), p. 14.

48. YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis* (n. 3), p. 40.

49. This technique is very close to the procedure exemplified in *Praed. sanct.* 7.13 and is described by HOUGHTON, *Augustine's Text* (n. 47), p. 89: "Augustine recasting the biblical text as a negative statement in order to focus attention on the precise wording and scope of the original".

50. Possidius, *Vita Aug.* 17 (PL 22, 48).

51. *Ibid.*

52. SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), p. 68.

53. Augustine, *coll. c. Maximin.* 16 (CCSL 87, 469.73–470.78): *Si autem Dominus uoluerit, quoniam longum est et tu remeare festinas, prosecutiones nostras ante oculos eorum qui legere*

Therefore, the first book of the *Contra Maximinum* summarises in twenty points the arguments that Maximinus failed to answer convincingly⁵⁴; the second book presents in more detail the critical issues of the Arian doctrine⁵⁵.

In this case, John 17,21 is not cited by accident, nor is it a mere corollary to John 10,30 that figures more prominently in the text. Maximinus replies to the question of how the Father and the Son are one in sharing nature and substance by using John 17,21⁵⁶. Maximinus' exegesis of the verse is remarkable insofar as it is the first Arian interpretation that has been preserved in direct tradition.

You claim that Christ, our Savior, did not say, "That we and they may be one", but "That they may be one in their nature and their substance, united and joined together in harmonious equality, as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one on account of the same undivided nature". I quote the passage again, and the readers can see for themselves what Christ said. He says in the gospel, praying to his Father for his disciples, "Father, make them one, as we also are one, as I in you and you in me, that they may also be one in us, that this world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me"⁵⁷. I believe what I read; he speaks of love, not of substance. ... He is there as the Son, as another than the Father, though the Father and the Son are, as you have explained, one in harmony (*unum*), not one in number (*unus*). The first 'one' pertains to harmony; the second to the singular number. ... Look, then, at what the Lord says, "The Father and I are one"⁵⁸, which we believe and accept with certain faith. He who says, 'I', is the Son; in saying, 'the Father', he indicates that the Father is another. He says, 'one' in harmony (*unum*), not 'one' in number (*unus*). I have often said that 'one' (*unum*) pertains to harmony. How could the Father and the Son not be one, when the Son cries out,

uoluerint, quanta potero perspicuitate constituam, et te ueris quidem testimoniis diuinis, falsa tamen uestra dogmata probare uoluisse, uelis nolis, ostendam; transl. R.J. TESKE, in J.E. ROTELLE (ed.), Arianism and Other Heresies (The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century I/18), New York, New City Press, 1995, p. 220.

54. SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), p. 76.

55. Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 2.1 (CCSL 87, 534.1-13): *Res iam postulat ut in eo quod reliquum est, opitulante Domino, impleam promissionem meam. In operis quippe huius exordio, 'Prius', inquam, 'ostendam refellere te non potuisse quae dixi; deinde, quantum necessarium uidebitur, ego refellam quae ipse dixisti'. Quia ergo, sicut adiuuante Deo potui, ostendi ea quae dixi non te potuisse refellere, superest ut ea quae dixisti, ego refellam, sicut Deo adiuuante potero. Priores itaque prosecutiones tuas, quibus continuo reddidi meas in hac disputatione quae nunc a me suscepta est, non retractabo. Illam uero ultimam tam prolixam, ut mihi die illo spatium responionis auferret, ita redarguam, si uoluerit qui nos regit, ut adquiescas lumini ueritatis, si contentionis tenebras non amaueris.*

56. Augustine, *coll. c. Maximin.* 15.22 (631.1-8). See SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), p. 72: "Particolare cura dedica Massimino alia trattazione del rapporto Padre-Figlio col duplice obiettivo di rilevare l'inferiorità del Figlio rispetto al Padre ma anche la sua natura di essere assolutamente perfetto e trascendente il mondo della creazione".

57. John 17,21-23.

58. John 10,30.

"I always do those things which are pleasing to the Father"⁵⁹? He would not be one with the Father, if on occasion he acted in opposition to the Father. Even the apostles are one in this sense with the Father and the Son, insofar as in all things they aim at the will of God the Father and are themselves found to be subject to the one God the Father in imitation of the Son. We do not read that the Savior prayed only for the apostles that they might be one, but also for those who would believe through their word. He said, "I do not ask for these alone, but for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may be one, just as you, Father, in me and I in you, that they may be one in us, that this world may know that you have sent me and have loved them just as you have loved me"⁶⁰. He speaks of love, as we said, not of divinity⁶¹.

Maximinus, although disturbed by the way Augustine treats Scripture⁶², does not employ the same tricks used by his adversary, i.e., a comparison of different verses that explain one another, emphasis on the textual *lectio*, and recourse to grammatical analysis⁶³. It seems that he has before his eyes the text that he is quoting, a point that makes him confident of his conclusion:

59. John 8,29.

60. John 17,20-23.

61. Augustine, *coll. c. Maximin.* 15.22 (456.627–457.638; 457.645–458.648; 458.659–459.677): *Dicis quod 'non dixerit Saluator noster Christus: Vt ipsi et nos unum, sed: Vt ipsi sint unum, in natura sua et substantia sua, concordia aequalitate quodam modo uniti atque conflati, et Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus unum, propter indiuiduam eandem que naturam'. Recito lectionem quam legentes possunt probare quid enim Christus dixerit. Sic ait in euangelio, Patrem suum orans pro discipulis: 'Pater, fac illos unum, sicut nos unum sumus; sicut ego in te et tu in me, ut et illi in nobis unum sint, ut cognoscat hic mundus quoniam tu me misisti, et dilexisti illos sicut me dilexisti'. Quod lego, credo. Dilectionis fecit mentionem, et non substantiae. ... Ita tamen ut Filius, ut alius a Patre; qui quidem, ut ipse exposuisti, 'unum' sunt, Pater et Filius, non tamen 'unus'. 'Vnum' ad concordiam pertinet, 'unus' ad numerum singularitatis. ... Intuere igitur et illud quod Dominus ait: 'Ego et Pater unum sumus'; quod certa fide a nobis creditur et suscipitur. Qui dicit: 'Ego', Filius est; qui dicit: 'et Pater', alterum Patrem ostendit. 'Vnum' ait, non 'unus'. Saepius dictum est quia unum ad concordiam pertinet. Quomodo non unum Pater et Filius, cum quando clamat Filius: 'Ego quae placita sunt Patri facio semper'? Tunc demum non erat unum cum Patre, si contraria Patri faceret aliquando. Sic autem et apostoli unum sunt cum Patre et Filio, in eo quod in omnibus ad uoluntatem Dei Patris respicientes, ad imitationem Filii subditi uni Deo Patri et ipsi inueniuntur. Et non tantum pro apostolis legitimus Saluatorem orasse, ut unum sint, sed etiam et pro credituris per uerbum illorum, dicens: 'Non solum pro his rogo, sed et pro credituris per uerbum illorum in me, ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et illi in nobis unum sint; ut cognoscat hic mundus quia tu me misisti, et dilexisti illos sicut me dilexisti'. Dilectionis fecit, ut diximus, mentionem, et non diuinitatis; transl. TESKE, in ROTELLE (ed.), *Arianism* (n. 53), pp. 215-216.*

62. See Augustine, *coll. c. Maximin.* 13 (403.58-66): *Maximinus respondit: In quibus nos reprehendis, in ipsis ipse detegeris. Certum est enim, diuina nos monet scriptura, quod 'ex multiloquio non effugies peccatum, parcens autem labiis, sapiens eris' (Prov 10,19), quamuis etiam et si per totum diem quisque de diuinis scripturis proferat testimonia, non in uerbositate illi impunitur. Reuera, quod si aut litteraria arte usus aut expressione spiritus sui, quisque enim concinnet uerba quae non continent sanctae scripturae, et otiosi sunt et superflui.*

63. Furthermore, the textual inquiry is not peculiar to Augustine; his frequent underlining of the differences between *sint* and *sumus* parallels Maximinus' treatment of *unum* and *unus*.

“I believe what I read, he (= Christ) speaks of love, not of substance”⁶⁴. However, the fact that Maximinus quotes only extracts of the verse allows us to understand how he arrives at this interpretation. In fact, he does not find in John 17,21 any reference to the shared nature between the Father and the Son; instead he finds a clear allusion to the bond of love between the two divine persons in John 17,23 and in John 8,29, and these passages help Maximinus to counter Augustine’s claims. Moreover, Augustine relied on a selection of unconvincing and weak quotations, as Manlio Simonetti has demonstrated⁶⁵.

Augustine’s response does not stand out for originality and emphasises merely the discrepancies between the orthodox doctrine and that of his adversary. As Simonetti has underlined, the impermeable nature of the arguments of the two contenders emerges here in all its scope⁶⁶. John 17,21 appears twice: in the first book, when the bishop of Hippo summarises the most important points of the debate (*duodecimo loco*⁶⁷), and more extensively in the second book.

In *c. Maximin.* 1.12, Augustine criticises his adversary for saying that “the apostles are one with the Father and the Son”⁶⁸, without presenting any scriptural proof; in fact, “Christ did not say ‘That we and they may be one’”, but rather “that they may be one, as also we are one”⁶⁹. The expression “*sicut et nos*” emphasises the separation between humans and God⁷⁰:

64. Augustine, *coll. c. Maximin.* 15.22 (457.631-633): *Recito lectionem quam legentes possunt probare quid enim Christus dixerit*; transl. TESKE, in ROTELLE (ed.), *Arianism* (n. 53), p. 215.

65. See 1 Cor 3,6-8; SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), p. 70 (Simonetti considers Augustine’s choice to refer to Acts 4,32 to prove the oneness of the Father and the Son to be inappropriate since the verse suggests only a moral unity); p. 75 (the same can be said for 1 Cor 3,6ff.).

66. Simonetti’s point on the repetitive and monotonous nature of the controversy seems to me very convincing; see SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), p. 84: “gli argomenti nuovi che Agostino adduce nella polemica (maggiore insistenza sulla Trinità come *unus Deus*, riferimento delle teofanie a tutte e tre le persone divine, processione dello Spirito Santo *ab utroque*), derivati dal personale approfondimento cui egli aveva sottoposto la dottrina trinitaria, procedevano in senso perfettamente opposto rispetto alla direttrice fondamentale del pensiero ariano, e quindi nel dibattito contribuivano soltanto ad accentuare il solco che lo divideva dall’avversario. Di qui deriva, a mio avviso, quel continuo, monotono insistere da ambedue le parti sugli stessi argomenti, sulle stesse affermazioni, sulle stesse interpretazioni degli stessi passi della Scrittura, che riflette eloquentemente l’assoluta impermeabilità di ambedue i contendenti agli argomenti dell’avversario”.

67. Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 1.12 (519.1); see SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), p. 76.

68. Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 1.12 (519.4-6): *Sed magnis coartatus angustiis adfirmare ausus es quod apostoli unum sint cum Patre et Filio*; transl. TESKE, in ROTELLE (ed.), *Arianism* (n. 53), p. 257.

69. Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 1.12 (519.8-9): *Christus autem non ait: ‘ut ipsi et nos unum simus’, sed ait: ut sint unum, sicut et nos unum sumus* (John 17,21); transl. *ibid.*

70. See Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 2.22 (634.57-59): *Potest ergo quisquam sanctorum dicere: Ego et Deus unum sumus? Absit hoc a cordibus et oribus sanctis.*

humans share the same nature as the Father and the Son, in turn, share the divine nature⁷¹. Maximinus, quoting 1 Cor 3,8, stressed the power of love to build unity, but Augustine replies that love can unite different beings only if they share the same nature, as is the case among men⁷². Through the prayer of his Son, God calls men to unity, and not only to a mere unity of nature, but also to a unity of will and love⁷³.

Additionally, Augustine tries to clarify the meaning of John 17,21 by appealing to John 17,24, an approach that lessens the emphasis given to the *unum*, stressing instead the importance of the mutual indwelling:

Moreover ..., he went on to add, "Father, I want that where I am they may also be with me"⁷⁴. He says, "That where I am they may also be with me"; he does not say, "That they may be one with me". What he wanted was that they might be with him, not that he and they might be one⁷⁵.

Christ, as Mediator, consubstantial with the Father and equally true man among men, prays for his disciples without denying his divinity. Nevertheless, Augustine underlines firmly the discrepancy there is between the "heavenly" oneness, which characterises the Father and the Son both in terms of nature and a common love and will, and the "earthly" oneness, which the Mediator himself came to realise among his believers. The Johannine *unum* is the fruit of salvation and the paradigm for Augustine's Church. But, from an ontological point of view, the two entities remain separated and are ultimately not comparable⁷⁶.

71. Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 1.12 (520.25-28): *Cum ergo toties dixerit: 'Vt sint unum', non tamen alicubi dixit: 'ut ipsi et nos simus unum, hoc est, ut nobis cum sint unum', sed ait: 'in nobis' dixit, ait: 'sicut nos', id est, ipsi secundum naturam suam, nos secundum nostrum; c. Maximin.* 2.22 (632.17): *pro suae capacitate naturae; (632.28-32): Quoniam homines qui natura unum sunt, summe atque perfecte secundum suum modum unum esse non possunt iustitiae plenitudine, nisi in Deo perficiantur, ut unum sint in Patre et Filio, id est, in ipsis unum, non cum ipsis unum.*

72. See Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 2.22 (631.7-14): *Quid enim te adiuvat, quod dilectionis consensione affirmas dictum esse de Paulo et Apollo: 'Qui plantat autem et qui rigat, unum sunt' (1 Cor 3,8); cum eos non ostendas diversae fuisse substantiae? Ambo quippe homines erant. Si enim non diligenter invicem, natura unum essent, dilectione non essent; si autem unum natura non essent, unum dici dilectione non possent.*

73. Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 2.22 (631.14-632.21): *Poscit ergo Filius ut ita sint unum, quomodo ipse et Pater unum sunt; id est, non solum natura, quod iam erant; verum etiam perfectione caritatis atque iustitiae, pro suae capacitate naturae, quantum in Dei regno esse potuerint: ut etiam ipsi summe unum sint in natura sua, quemadmodum Pater et Filius summe unum sunt, quamvis in excellentiore atque incomparabiliter meliore natura sua.*

74. John 17,23.

75. Augustine, *c. Maximin.* 2.22 (633.39-42): *Adiunxit: 'Pater, uolo ut ubi ego sum, et illi sint mecum'. Vbi sum, inquit, mecum sint; non ait: 'unum mecum sint'. Hoc ergo uoluit, ut cum illo essent, non ut illi et ipse unum essent.*

76. However, if the Gnostics and Origen used John 17,21 to emphasize that the first step on the path of salvation is the discovery of the sharing of "substance" between the Godhead

Thus, Simonetti correctly emphasises the radical divergence of the doctrines expressed by Maximinus and Augustine, a reality that mirrors the real aim of the debate, which is not to persuade the contender, but to defeat him in the presence of a large audience⁷⁷. However, it must be noted that the two adversaries share not only the same attitude, but also the same argumentative strategies⁷⁸, which is a symptom of the total radicalisation of both positions and of a methodological preponderance for grammatical analysis in the interpretation of a biblical text.

Before moving on to another example, it might be useful to investigate whether the contenders treat scriptural quotations in a similar manner. Augustine's version of John 17,21 adheres quite strictly to the Vulgate, except for the phrase "*ut credat mundus*", which is probably his "mental text"⁷⁹. In contrast with other cases, the passages examined in this paper do not display the typical "flattening" technique, which, according to Houghton, consists in quoting consciously or unconsciously a shortened form of a text in order to emphasise its core and to produce a more stable and easier text-type⁸⁰. Also, the "clusters" of biblical quotations, which scholars have used as chronological markers to date Augustine's writings⁸¹, in these cases seem more associated with the previous polemical tradition than with a personal inquiry⁸².

and human beings, Augustine, for his part, uses John 17,21 to accentuate the ontological distance between God and men, and the closeness among the believers.

77. SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), pp. 83-84.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79: "La tenacia con cui Massimino e Agostino a più riprese ripropongono la loro interpretazione degli stessi passi evangelici per confrontare la loro tesi senza tener conto delle osservazioni dell'avversario è chiaro indizio che ormai, cristallizzatesi le opposte dottrine una contro l'altra, l'interpretazione di singoli passi scritturistici non avveniva più secondo un procedimento, per così dire, obiettivo, ma piuttosto in funzione di un dato sistema dottrinale e anche di un determinato stato d'animo".

79. HOUGHTON, *Augustine's Text* (n. 47), pp. 334-335.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 68ff.; and, in particular, p. 88: "The form (or forms) of Augustine's mental text can usually be determined for commonly cited verses. Indeed, the more frequently Augustine quotes a verse and the more stable his text, the less likely it is to derive directly from a biblical manuscript. This form of text is already found for some verses in his earliest works, proving that it reflects Old Latin versions with which he was familiar. As details such as auxiliary words and sentence structure are likely to have been affected by flattening, his mental text is primarily valuable for the rendering of key words and phrases. Again, it can be problematic to decide whether a frequently appearing reading not attested elsewhere derives from a version now lost or is a feature of Augustine's mental text".

81. See A.-M. LA BONNARDIÈRE, *Recherches de chronologie augustiniennne* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 23), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1965, p. 16; HOMBERT, *Nouvelles recherches* (n. 18), p. VI.

82. HOUGHTON, *Augustine's Text* (n. 47), pp. 44ff.; in particular, p. 46: "In controversies between different sectarian groups, both sides had recourse to Scripture as the ultimate authority. Augustine developed his own dossier of biblical verses to counter his opponents' collection of proof-texts, and the same verses are found in combination across a number of his works, which often assists with determining their chronology".

Maximinus, on the other hand, seems to quote a different version of John 17,21⁸³. Even if “in Augustine’s polemical works ... it is clear that the form of his biblical reference is sometimes directly influenced by the text of his opponents”⁸⁴ – and this happens also in places in the *Contra Maximinum*⁸⁵ – this peculiarity does not occur at John 17,21.

The last example of this section comes from the fourth book of *De Trinitate*, even if, according to Simonetti, this work cannot be considered an anti-Arian writing⁸⁶. However, both the themes and the techniques employed in commenting John 17,21 are closely related to those used in previous arguments against the Arians Pascentius and Maximinus. The quotation (not of the single verse 21, but of the whole passage, vv. 20-23) appears in the famous “Hymn to the One”, a celebration of Christ as the only one who rescues humans disintegrated by sin, reconciling them with God⁸⁷. Before quoting John 17,21, Augustine introduces the unity theme through the almost compulsive opposition and *variatio* between the adjectives *multa* and *unum*⁸⁸. If *multa* characterises irrevocably the human condition on earth, *unum* represents its future aim (*Deo reconciliati haereamus uni, fruamur uno, permaneamus unum*)⁸⁹. Thus, the expression “*per Mediatorem*” introduces the subsequent christological sequence (with the quotation)⁹⁰ and primarily displays the only way to escape multiplicity and

83. R. GRYSON, *Les citations scripturaires des œuvres attribuées à l'évêque arien Maximinus*, in *RBen* 88 (1978) 45-80, p. 46, and, in particular, pp. 70-71: “Comment caractériser aussi exactement que possible le texte évangélique d'un auteur latin de cette époque? On ne trouvera pratiquement jamais, nous l'avons dit, un manuscrit biblique avec lequel il coïncide exactement. Il s'accorde tantôt avec l'un, tantôt avec l'autre, et en cherchant à le situer par rapport aux manuscrits de Jülicher, on est bien vite complètement désorienté; à peine croit-on avoir trouvé un fil conducteur qu'il vous échappe”.

84. HOUGHTON, *Augustine's Text* (n. 47), p. 72.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

86. SIMONETTI, *S. Agostino* (n. 28), p. 55.

87. See Augustine, *de Trinit.* 4.7.11 (CCSL 50, 175.7–176.21): *Quia enim ab uno Deo summo et uero per impietatis iniquitatem resilientes et dissonantes defluxeramus et euaueramus in multa discissi per multa et inhaerentes in multis, oportebat nutu et imperio Dei miserantis ut ipsa multa uenturum conclamarent unum, et a multis conclamatus ueniret unus, et multa contestarentur uenisse unum, et a multis exonerati ueniremus ad unum, et multis peccatis in anima mortui et propter peccatum in carne morituri amaremus sine peccato mortuum in carne pro nobis unum, et in resuscitatum credentes et cum illo per fidem spiritu resurgentes iustificaremur in uno iusto facti unum, nec in ipsa carne nos resurrecturos desperaremus cum multa membra intueamur praecessisse nos caput unum in quo nunc per fidem mundati et tunc per speciem redintegrati et per mediatorem Deo reconciliati haereamus uni, fruamur uno, permaneamus unum.*

88. I. BOCHET, *The Hymn to the One in Augustine's De Trinitate IV*, in *Augustinian Studies* 38 (2007) 41-60, p. 46.

89. Augustine, *de Trinit.* 4.7.11 (176.20-21).

90. Augustine, *de Trinit.* 4.8.12 (176.1–177.11): *Sic ipse Filius Dei, Verbum Dei et idem ipse mediator Dei et hominum Filius hominis, aequalis Patri per diuinitatis unitatem et particeps noster per humanitatis susceptionem, Patrem interpellans pro nobis per id quod homo erat nec*

divisions⁹¹, i.e., through Christ who is a “multiple unity”, as the *Enarratio in Psalmum* 103.1 suggests⁹². The comment is split into two parts. At the beginning, the exegete elaborates a paradoxical explication, comparing what Jesus could have said with what he really said⁹³. Second, the phrase “*ad hoc enim valet quod ait*” introduces the actual comment of the verse:

For to this His words come, “That they may be one, even as we are one”⁹⁴; namely, that as the Father and Son are one, not only in equality of substance, but also in will, so those also may be one, between whom and God the Son is mediator, not only in that they are of the same nature, but also through the same union of love. And then He goes on thus to intimate the truth itself, that He is the Mediator, through whom we are reconciled to God, by saying, “I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one”⁹⁵⁹⁶.

At this point, Augustine’s reflection on being *unum/unus* is a structured exegetical unit⁹⁷, a unit that he can situate even outside the polemical discourse against the Arians to support and develop other theological implications.

tamen tacens quod Deus cum Patre unum erat et inter cetera ita loquitur: ‘Non pro his autem rogo, inquit, tantum sed et pro eis qui credituri sunt per uerbum eorum in me ut omnes unum sint sicut tu pater in me et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut mundus credat quia tu me misisti. et ego claritatem quam dedisti mihi dedi illis ut sint unum sicut et nos unum sumus’.

91. The contrast between plurality (which implies sin) and unity (which implies virtue) is one of the main *foci* of Origen’s exegesis of John 17,21. See Origenes, *HEz* 9.1 (GCS 33, 406.1-20); *Prin* 1.6.4 (GCS 22, 286.3-9).

92. See in BOCHET, *The Hymn* (n. 88), p. 49; and for the comment of this passage, see also pp. 50-53.

93. Augustine, *de Trinit.* 4.9.12 (177.1-14): *Non dixit: ‘ego et ipsi unum’, quamuis per id quod ecclesiae caput est et corpus eius ecclesia posset dicere: ‘Ego et ipsi’ non unum sed ‘unus’, quia caput et corpus unum est Christus. Sed diuinitatem suam consubstantialem Patri ostendens (propter quod et alio loco dicit: ‘Ego et Pater unum sumus’ [John 10,30]), in suo genere, hoc est in eiusdem naturae consubstantiali parilitate, uult esse suos unum sed in ipso quia in se ipsis non possent dissociati ab inuicem per diuersas uoluntates et cupiditates et immunditiam peccatorum; unde mundantur per mediatorem ut sint in illo unum non tantum per eandem naturam qua omnes ex hominibus mortalibus aequales angelis fiunt sed etiam per eandem in eandem beatitudinem conspirantem concordissimam uoluntatem in unum spiritum quodam modo caritatis igne conflata.*

94. John 17,22.

95. John 17,21.

96. Augustine, *de Trinit.* 4.9.12 (177.14–178.21): *Ad hoc enim ualet quod ait: ‘Vt sint unum sicut et nos unum sumus’, ut quemadmodum Pater et Filius non tantum aequalitate substantiae sed etiam uoluntate unum sunt, ita et hi inter quos et Deum mediator est Filius non tantum per id quod eiusdem naturae sunt sed etiam per eandem dilectionis societatem unum sint. Deinde idipsum quod mediator est per quem reconciliamur Deo sic indicat: ‘Ego’, inquit, ‘in eis et tu in me ut sint consummati in unum’; transl. A.W. HADDAN, in P. SCHAFF (ed.), *St. Augustin. On the Holy Trinity. Doctrinal Treatises. Moral Treatises* (Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, I.3), Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 1995, p. 76.*

97. BOCHET, *The Hymn* (n. 88), p. 53: “The long reflections of *Letter* 238 thus throw a light on the rather elliptical reasoning of §12 in *De Trinitate*, Book IV, which was very probably written at a later date: Augustine can now summarize in a few dense lines the result of his minute analysis of scriptural language”.

IV. HOW TO PREACH UNITY

The *Tractatus in Iohannem* are the first Latin commentaries on the entire Gospel of John. According to Houghton's analysis, Augustine preached only the first fifty-four homilies – devoted to chapters 1–12 of the gospel – while the last ones, more uniform in length and more balanced in exegetical structure, may have been composed to complete the commentary⁹⁸.

The preacher devotes most of *Tractatus* 110 to John 17,21 and its context⁹⁹, while *Tractatus* 111 deals marginally with the same passage. Both homilies share not only a group of contiguous verses, but a pervasive emphasis on the struggle between the *nos*, that is, Augustine himself and his listeners/readers, and the *κόσμος/mundus*, a threatening reality which, at the same time, is always the object of God's care¹⁰⁰.

From the beginning, *Tractatus* 110 calls upon Augustine's audience to interact with the biblical text:

After the Lord Jesus had prayed for His disciples whom He had with Him at the time, and had conjoined with them others who were also His own, by saying, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word"¹⁰¹, as if we were inquiring what or wherefore He

98. HOUGHTON, *Augustine's Text* (n. 47), p. 107; the discovery of the *Ep.* 23.A seems to confirm this hypothesis; see Augustine, *Ep.* 23.A 3.6 (CSEL 88, 123.11-16): *et ut faciam de Iohannis quoque euangelio ea quae restant, dictare iam coepi populares tractatus non prolixos mittendos Carthaginem ea conditione ut, si uult idem senex noster sibi ceteros mitti, <dicat> neque cum dixerit edere differat. iam senex dictaui; noctes enim sabbati et dominici ipsis proprie deputaui*; W.H. DRECOLL, *Christology and Anti-Heretical Strategies in the In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, in *Augustinian Studies* 48 (2017) 247-261, pp. 247-248, formulated a different explanation, suggesting that the collection of homilies is split in to three parts, considering *in euang. Ioh.* 20-22 as a later addition. Furthermore, Drecoll dates the first part (*in euang. Ioh.* 1-16) to the period before to 411 and the second part (*in euang. Ioh.* 17-19 and 23-54) to the years prior to 419; then, the third part (*in euang. Ioh.* 55-124) to 419 or shortly after.

99. For Augustine's quotation technique, see HOUGHTON, *Augustine's Text* (n. 47), p. 58: "There is occasionally a resumptive citation of several verses, which may also have assisted him in keeping his place in the manuscript during his sermon. Otherwise, Augustine normally treats the text in a linear fashion, quoting a single verse or a phrase at a time and analysing each clause and its constituent elements".

100. Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 111.1 (CCSL 36, 628.12-13, 15-21, 30-33): *Nonne illi de quibus alio loco dicit: 'Nemo uenit ad me, nisi Pater qui misit me, traxerit eum'* (cf. John 14,6)? ... *Ipsi sunt ergo quos a Patre accepit, quos et ipse elegit de mundo, atque elegit ut iam non sint de mundo, sicut non est et ipse de mundo; ut sint tamen etiam ipsi mundus credens et cognoscens quod Christus a Deo Patre sit missus; ut mundus ex mundo liberaretur, ne mundus Deo reconciliandus cum mundo inimicissimo damnaretur. ... Ita mundus reconciliatus ex inimico liberabitur mundo, cum in illum exserit potestatem suam, ut eum in mortem mittat aeternam; hunc autem facit suum, cui uitam donet aeternam.*

101. John 17,20.

prayed for them, He straightway subjoined, “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us”¹⁰²¹⁰³.

The hypothetical question (“*uelut quareremus*”) intends to emphasise the novelty of Jesus’ second prayer (cf. John 17,11), especially the fact that it moves from the speaker’s historical reality to reach the second generation of disciples and also Augustine and his community¹⁰⁴. As he notes shortly after, the unity for which Christ prays connects future disciples (*nos*) with those of the past¹⁰⁵. Nevertheless, unity may be realised only between these two groups as the gospel’s words clarify: Christians can be *unum in* the Father and *in* the Son, but not *with* nor *as* them¹⁰⁶. Although it does not deny the role of the Incarnation¹⁰⁷, John 17,21, like John 10,30, must be

102. John 17,21.

103. Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 110.1 (622.1-7): *Cum Dominus Iesus orasset pro discipulis suis quos tunc secum habebat, atque adiunxisset suos alios, dicens: ‘Non pro his autem rogo tantum, sed et pro eis qui credituri sunt per uerbum eorum in me’, uelut quareremus, quid uel quare pro illis rogaret, continuo subintulit, dicens: ‘Vt omnes unum sint, sicut tu, Pater, in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint’*; transl. J. GIBB, in P. SCHAFF (ed.), *St. Augustin. Homilies on the Gospel of John. Homilies on the First Epistle of John. Soliloquies* (Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, I.7), Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 1995, p. 408.

104. Augustine’s interest in *nos* may arise from a real necessity of building community. According to A.D. FITZGERALD, *Engaging the Gospel of John*, in *Augustinian Studies* 48 (2017) 3-22, p. 8, the bishop of Hippo composed this group of homilies shortly after the publication of the Edict of Unity (405 CE), which allowed Donatists to leave their church and to be admitted into Catholic communities. If so, this justifies Augustine’s exegetical choices in commenting upon the Gospel of John *and* the overcoming of a reading of John 17,21 that only emphasises the contrast between *nos* and *vos*; see also Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 1.2-3 (1.1-2.11); cf. Augustine, *serm.* 296.13-14.

105. Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 110.1 (622.9-11).

106. Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 110.1 (622.11-13): *Vbi diligenter aduertendum est non dixisse Dominum, ut omnes unum simus, sed: ‘Vt omnes unum sint’*; cf. *in euang. Ioh.* 34.7 (314.26-315.34): *Desideras Deum? Quis uidet, nisi Deus? A quo enim petis Deum, sicut panem, sicut aquam, sicut aurum, sicut argentum, sicut frumentum? A quo petis Deum, nisi a Deo? Ipse petitur a seipso, qui promittit seipsum. Extendat anima cupiditatem suam, et sinu capaciore quaerat comprehendere quod oculus non uidit, nec auris audiuit, nec in cor hominis adscendit. Desiderari potest, concupisci potest, suspirari in illud potest; digne cogitari, et uerbis explicari non potest*. See M.-F. BERROUARD, in *Saint Augustin. Homélie sur l’Évangile de Saint Jean CIV–CXXIV* (Œuvres de Saint Augustin, 75), Paris, Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 2003, p. 24: “Dieu échappe en effet à toutes les prises de l’homme: il n’est pas seulement invisible, il est encore incompréhensible et ineffable: tous les noms peuvent être dits de lui en raison de l’universalité de ses bienfaits, mais il ne s’en trouve aucun qui lui convient en raison de sa transcendance”; DRECOLL, *Christology* (n. 98), pp. 248-249, finds in the themes of Christology and Incarnation the two main turning points of the *Tractatus*, i.e. “the Father-Son relationship” and the “personal unity of the Logos and the human being of Jesus”.

107. See Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 31.5 (296.30-35): *Magna igitur misericordia Domini nostri Iesu Christi, factum esse eum propter nos in tempore, per quem facta sunt tempora; factum esse inter omnia, per quem facta sunt omnia; factum esse quod fecit. Factus est enim quod fecerat; factus est enim homo qui hominem fecerat, ne periret quod fecerat*; see BERROUARD, in

understood as a manifest declaration of Christ's divinity¹⁰⁸. It is not the first time that Augustine attempts to draw attention to the exact meaning and wording of the prayer¹⁰⁹. On this point, again, he reaffirms that only through proper consideration of the grammar of Scripture are the listeners/readers able to acquire its correct interpretation. This is particularly true in the case of the interpretation of the ambiguity of being *unum*¹¹⁰ and also when Augustine turns his attention to the last part of the verse, questioning whether the conversion of the world depends upon the fulfilment of this unity. The comment on the phrase "*ut mundus credat*" progresses in two stages. First, the exegete has to solve the *aporia* between the passage in question and the preceding verse 9 where Jesus states: "I pray not for the world". Following the implicit rule that Scripture cannot contradict itself, the term *mundus*, a term that Augustine repeats almost compulsively, implies a twofold reality: there is a world that will be condemned (1 Cor 11,32), and for which Christ did not pray (John 17,9), and another one that Christ came to save.

After establishing the identity of the recipient of Jesus' prayer, Augustine turns to explain the sentence in order to determine if John 17,21 implies any cause-effect relation between the oneness of the future disciples and the conversion of the world. By pointing out that the phrase includes a unique

Saint Augustin. Homélie (n. 106), p. 11: "Celui qui est égal et coéternel au Père s'est inséré dans le temps et s'est fait temporel afin de nous libérer du temps et de transfigurer notre mortalité par son éternité".

108. Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 110.1 (622.16-29): *Vt sint unum sicut et nos. Quamobrem ita est Pater in Filio, et Filius in Patre, ut unum sint, quia unius substantiae sunt; nos uero esse quidem in eis possumus, unum tamen cum eis esse non possumus, quia unius substantiae nos et ipsi non sumus, in quantum Filius cum Patre Deus est. Nam in quantum homo est, eiusdem substantiae est cuius et nos sumus. Sed nunc illud potius uoluit commendare, quod alio loco ait: 'Ego et Pater unum sumus', ubi eandem Patris et suam significauit esse naturam. Ac per hoc et cum in nobis sunt Pater et Filius, uel etiam Spiritus Sanctus, non debemus eos putare naturae unius esse nobiscum. Sic itaque sunt in nobis, uel nos in illis, ut illi unum sint in natura sua, nos unum in nostra. Sunt quippe ipsi in nobis, tamquam Deus in templo suo; sumus autem nos in illis, tamquam creatura in creatore suo.*

109. Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 107.5 (614.28-615.17): *Sed adtende quod sequitur: 'Vt sint, inquit, unum sicut et nos' (John 17,11). Non ait: ut nobiscum sint unum, aut, simus unum ipsi et nos, sicut unum sumus nos; sed ait: 'ut sint unum sicut et nos'. Ipsi utique in natura sua sint unum, sicut et nos in nostra unum sumus. Quod procul dubio uerum non diceret, nisi secundum hoc diceret, quod eiusdem naturae Deus est cuius et Pater, secundum quod alibi dixit: 'Ego et Pater unum sumus', non secundum id quod etiam homo est; nam secundum hoc: 'Pater maior me est' (John 14,28), dixit. Sed quoniam una eademque persona est Deus et homo, intellegimus hominem in eo quod rogat; intellegimus autem Deum in eo quod unum sunt et ipse et ille quem rogat. Sed est adhuc in consequentibus locus ubi de hac re diligentius disputandum est.*

110. See Augustine, *in euang. Ioh.* 110.4 (624.1-3): *Deinde addidit: 'Ego in eis, et tu in me, ut sint consummati in unum' (John 17,23). Vbi se mediatorem inter Deum et homines breuiter intimaui.*

verb (*rogo*) and three subordinate clauses introduced by *ut*, the exegete presents to his audience the correct reading of the three petitions:

How, then, are we to understand Him when He says, “That they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me”¹¹¹, but just in this way, that He did not assign the cause of the world believing to the fact that those others are one, as if it believed on the ground that it saw them to be one; for the world itself here consisteth of all who by their own believing become one; but in His prayer He said, “That the world may believe”, just as in His prayer He also said, “That they all may be one”; and still further in the same prayer, “That they also may be one in us”. For the words, ‘they all may be one’, are equivalent to ‘the world may believe’, since it is by believing that they become one, perfectly one; that is, those who, although one by nature, had ceased to be so by their mutual dissensions. In fine, if the verb which He uses, ‘I pray’, be understood in the third clause, or rather, to make the whole fuller, be everywhere supplied, the explanation of this sentence will be all the clearer: I pray “that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee”; I pray “that they also may be one in us”; I pray “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me”¹¹².

CONCLUSION

Based upon the preceding quotation, we can draw some conclusions. While acknowledging the ambiguities and difficulties of the Gospel of John in general and the case of John 17,21 in particular, Augustine does not succumb to these complexities. Instead he proposes to the readers a hermeneutical exercise based on the employment of the *ars grammatica*¹¹³. As Lienhard has noted, “the one-time teacher of grammar had not changed his habits all

111. John 17,21.

112. Augustine, in *euang. Ioh.* 110.2 (623.28-43): *Quomodo ergo intellecturi sumus quid ait: ‘ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut credat mundus quia tu me misisti’, nisi quia non in eo causam posuit ut credat mundus, quia illi unum sunt, tamquam ideo credat quod eos esse unum uidet, cum ipse mundus sint omnes, qui credendo unum fiunt; sed orando dixit: ‘ut mundus credat’, sicut orando dixit: ‘ut omnes unum sint’, orando dixit: ‘ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint’? Hoc est enim ‘omnes unum sint’, quod est ‘mundus credat’, quoniam credendo unum fiunt; perfecte unum, qui cum natura essent unum, dissentiendo ab uno non erant unum. Denique si uerbum quod ait: rogo, tertio subaudiamus, uel potius quo plenius fiat, ubique ponamus, erit huius expositio sententiae manifestior: rogo ‘ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te’; rogo ‘ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint’; rogo ‘ut mundus credat quia tu me misisti’; transl. GIBB, in SCHAFF (ed.), *St. Augustin. Homilies* (n. 103), p. 409.*

113. LAWLESS, *Augustine’s Use* (n. 46), p. 65: “In the peroration of his tractate, sec. 8, Augustine frankly admits that in all likelihood readers of the Fourth Gospel will lack the capacity for understanding its contents. Twice he tells his listeners that the *res* and the *fides* of Christianity are of far greater importance than the human speech, *verba*, which tries to encapsulate them. Meanwhile, he adds, obscurities and doubts generated by this Johannine

that much"; in fact, he identifies the primary meaning of the verse by isolating the individual words¹¹⁴ and by giving only minimum space to the study of the context. This technique, common in doctrinal controversies¹¹⁵, is used in most situations where the bishop of Hippo appeals to John 17,21. In fact, as the quoted passages demonstrate, Augustine's interpretation finds its first expression already in the *De consensu evangelistarum*, but it finds its ultimate one in the polemical writings which belong to a later phase in his literary production. The survey shows that Augustine's reading of John 17,21 remained stable over time¹¹⁶ and also that he was able to adapt his interpretive lines to ever new contexts and needs.

Giuseppina Bellissima has noted that Augustine's grammatical method is evident in his exegetical works generally¹¹⁷, and this too becomes explicit in the case of John 17,21 in his polemical works. In this respect, even indirectly, Augustine proves to be a rightful heir of a process that Arnaldo Momigliano traced back to Eusebius. According to his analysis, in fact, the principle of authority and reliance on documents and sources are typical of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a work that constitutes one of the first steps in defining orthodoxy and in characterising the relation between the imperial power and the Church¹¹⁸. In dealing with John 17,21, Augustine appears to be perfectly

text must be examined in the light of the issues at hand and with the help of critical human intelligence, *causa et ratio*".

114. LIENHARD, *Reading the Bible* (n. 17), p. 16: "It does not take much reading in Augustine's commentaries on Scripture to realize that the one-time teacher of grammar had not changed his habits all that much. ... For Augustine, as for almost all the Fathers, the first and most basic unit of understanding was the single word. Augustine had the Scriptures read in the church as we do, in coherent passages. But when he explained them, he did not ask first about the meaning of the passage as a whole, or even of the single sentence, but about the meaning of each word". See also M. SIMONETTI, *Alcune osservazioni sull'interpretazione teologica della Sacra Scrittura in età patristica*, in *Orpheus* 2 (1981) 301-319, pp. 301-302.

115. YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis* (n. 3), p. 244: "In the appendix to his historical introduction, Simonetti suggests that one obvious difference between exegesis in doctrinal controversy and other forms of scriptural interpretation lies in the fact that 'scripture passages used for doctrinal ends were normally taken out of their original context and considered in isolation, producing results sometimes quite foreign to the sense which they would have if interpreted in their proper context'".

116. *Ibid.*, p. 245: "So texts abstracted for use in doctrinal controversy, being 'isolated from their original context, take on a life of their own and are often interpreted in the most diverse ways by different parties in controversy, but always in terms of the new doctrinal and polemical contexts into which they are inserted and which condition their meaning'".

117. G. BELLISSIMA, *Sant'Agostino grammatico*, in *Augustinus Magister. Congrès International Augustinien (Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1954)* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 3), Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1954, 35-42, p. 45.

118. A. MOMIGLIANO, *Storiografia pagana e cristiana nel secolo IV d.C.*, in ID. (ed.), *Il conflitto tra paganesimo e cristianesimo nel secolo IV*, Torino, Einaudi, 1968, 89-110, p. 102: "[Eusebio] accumulò prove e citazioni attingendole da fonti autorevoli e da documenti come riusciva

conscious of the dangers of an erroneous interpretation, and, appealing to grammar as the ultimate authority, he avoids relying on non-biblical words (i.e., the contested *ἁποστόλιον*).

To conclude, with Augustine we witness a radical change of direction in the reception of the Johannine text. In fact, he is a monolith in an exegetical landscape marked by plurality. Thanks to his episcopal authority and exacting grammatical repertoire, Augustine declares that the *reductio ad unum* also of scriptural interpretation is completed.

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naturale ad un antico controversialista... Una storia della Chiesa cristiana basata sulla nozione di ortodossia e sui suoi rapporti con un potere persecutore doveva di necessità diventare qualcosa di diverso da ogni altra storia. Il nuovo tipo di esposizione scelta da Eusebio si dimostrò adeguato al nuovo tipo di istituzione rappresentata dalla Chiesa cristiana. Si fondava sull'autorità e non su quel libero giudizio di cui gli storici pagani erano così fieri".

THE BARK AND THE TEXT

BEDE'S EXEGETICAL METHOD IN HIS NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

And so, most reverend Bishop Acca, complying diligently with your exhortations, I have put my effort into considering this volume, trusting in our true Helper and Consoler, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that he may be gracious to give us [the ability] to find, when the bark of the text (*cortice litterae*) is peeled back, something deeper and more sacred in the pith (literally marrow: *medulla*) of the spiritual sense, since by prophetic figures but in a clear way it designates the Lord himself and his temple and city, which we are.

Bede, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*¹

Unlike the other essays in this volume, this paper focuses on a writer from the very end of the patristic period, a figure considered by some in the Middle Ages to have been the fifth Latin Father of the Church: the Venerable Bede². Brought up as a child-oblate at the northern English monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow from the age of seven, Bede had access in maturity to one of the most significant scholarly libraries in early medieval western Europe. The institution's founding abbot Benedict Biscop, and his successor Ceolfrith, amassed this impressive from Mediterranean libraries through a series of visits each made to Rome³. Before his death, Benedict

1. Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, prologue; ed. D. HURST, *Opera exegetica 2A: De tabernaculo. De templo. In Ezram et Neemiam* (CCSL, 119A), Turnhout, Brepols, 1969, p. 237: *Quapropter reuerendissime antistes Acca tuis diligenter obsecundans hortamentis considerando eidem uolumini operam dedi confidens uero adiutore et consolatore domino ac saluatore nostro Iesu Christo quia donet nobis propitius resecto cortice litterae altius aliud et sacratius in medulla sensus spiritalis inuenire quod uidelicet ipsum dominum ac templum et ciuitatem eius quae nos sumus prophetis quidem figuris sed manifesta ratione designet*; transl. S. DE GREGORIO, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2006, pp. 1-2.

2. R.W. PFAFF, *Bede among the Fathers: The Evidence of Liturgical Commemoration*, in *Studia Patristica* 28 (1993) 225-229; J.F. KELLY, *On the Brink: Bede*, in *J ECS* 5 (1997) 85-103.

3. Bede recounted the creation of the Wearmouth and Jarrow libraries in his *Historia abbatum*, chs. 4, 6, 9, 11, 15, ed. and transl. C. GROCOCK – I.N. WOOD, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow: Bede's Homily i. 13 on Benedict Biscop; Bede's History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow; The Anonymous Life of Ceolfrith; Bede's Letter to Ecgbert*, Bishop of York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 22-75, at pp. 30-31, 34-35, 44-45,

had directed that no one should neglect or divide up the “very splendid and well-stocked library he had brought from Rome, and which was needed for the teaching of the church”⁴. These resources equipped Bede’s monastic teachers with plentiful books and other materials from which to educate him in his fluent mastery of Latin and its skilful use in prose and verse, his reverence for Scripture, and to set him on the path towards acquiring his unparalleled knowledge of patristic literature⁵. It was, as Joseph Kelly has argued, precisely because Bede had read the Fathers that he became such an imposing scholar⁶. That knowledge enabled him to produce a remarkable range of biblical commentaries of his own on texts from both the Old and New Testament between ca. 703 (when he circulated the first, *On Revelation*) and his death in 735.

Wearmouth-Jarrow stands out among religious houses in the West in the seventh and eighth centuries for manifesting a particular interest in improving the accuracy of texts of Jerome’s Vulgate translation of the Bible, a preoccupation that found direct reflection in Bede’s own writings⁷. Furthermore—in an era in which complete texts of the entire corpus of Scripture were rare⁸—the community owned a celebrated massive pandect of the *Vetus*

48-49, 56-59. For discussion of the books thus accumulated see M.L.W. LAISTNER, *The Library of the Venerable Bede*, in A.H. THOMPSON (ed.), *Bede: His Life, Times and Writings*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1935, 237-266; J.D.A. OGILVY, *The Place of Wearmouth-Jarrow in Western Cultural History* (Jarrow Lecture 1968), Jarrow, St Paul’s House, 1968; A. THACKER, *Bede and the Ordering of Understanding*, in S. DEGREGORIO (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, Morgantown, VA, West Virginia University Press, 2006, 37-63, pp. 40-41; M. LAPIDGE, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 34-7, and for a list of the authors known to Bede, *ibid.*, pp. 191-228.

4. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 11, ed. and transl. GROCOCK – WOOD, pp. 48-49: *Bibliothecam quam de Roma nobilissimam copiosissimamque aduexerat ad instructionem ecclesiae necessariam, sollicitè seruari integram ne per incuriam fedari aut passim dissipari praecepit.*

5. For Bede’s education see D. WHITELOCK, *Bede and His Teachers and Friends*, in G. BONNER (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, London, SPCK, 1976, 19-39; C.B. KENDALL, *Bede and Education*, in S. DEGREGORIO (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, 99-112, pp. 100-104.

6. KELLY, *On the Brink* (n. 2), p. 89.

7. For example, Bede, *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum* 22.17, ed. M.L.W. LAISTNER – D. HURST, *Opera exegetica: Expositio Actuum apostolorum. Retractatio in Actus apostolorum. Nomina regionum atque locorum de Actibus apostolorum. In epistulas VII catholicas* (CCSL, 121), Turnhout, Brepols, 1983, p. 159; cf. P. MEYVAERT, *Bede the Scholar*, in BONNER (ed.), *Famulus Christi* (n. 5), 40-69, p. 49.

8. R. MARSDEN, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 15), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 39-49; ID., *The Biblical Manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon England*, in R. GAMESON (ed.), *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*. I: c. 400-1100, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 406-435, pp. 407 and 433.

Latina translation (the so-called Codex Grandior, once part of Cassiodorus' library in Vivarium)⁹. In the years before 716, the monks made three further complete pandects containing a corrected version of the Vulgate text, possibly beginning this endeavour as early as the 690s¹⁰. St Peter's monastery at Wearmouth acquired one of these volumes, a second went to St Paul's in Jarrow, while Abbot Ceolfrith set off for Rome in 716 with the third, the so-called Codex Amiatinus, intending to give it to the pope, as the original verse dedicatory inscription demonstrates¹¹. Given the sheer scale of such an enterprise, it would seem inconceivable that Bede played no part in the creation of these manuscripts and indeed he wrote the *capitula* (chapter summaries) for the Old Testament books from Exodus to Judges preserved in the Codex Amiatinus¹². Although probably not one of that manuscript's scribes, he may well have been involved in scribal discussions about the most appropriate Latin word to use in a particular scriptural context. At one point in his commentary *On Acts* Bede referred to the perplexity of his students in encountering a diversity of readings of the same text in different manuscripts (*varietas codicum*), a remark which may offer some glimpse into his pedagogic habits¹³. Many such variant readings he attributed to scribal error, or poor word-choices in translation, but he knew well that familiarity

9. Bede mentioned the "old translation which Benedict had brought from Rome", *Historia abbatum*, ch. 15, pp. 58-59; it seems to have taken some time for the monks to realise that this manuscript had once belonged to Cassiodorus (as he made clear in his *Institutes* 1.14.2 (*Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones*, ed. R.A.B. MYNORS, Oxford, Clarendon, 1937, p. 40); P. MEYVAERT, *Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus*, in *Speculum* 71 (1996) 827-883, p. 832.

10. For a detailed discussion and analysis of these bibles see C. CHAZELLE, *The Codex Amiatinus and Its "Sister" Bibles: Scripture, Liturgy, and Art in the Milieu of the Venerable Bede* (Commentaria: Sacred Texts and Their Commentaries: Jewish, Christian and Islamic, 10), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2019; the Italian manuscript sources for the Vulgate text copied in the Codex Amiatinus have been discussed by MARSDEN, *The Text* (n. 8), pp. 140-201.

11. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiatino 1, fo 1/1v; the original inscription is now overwritten with a text that attributes the Bible to the monastery of San Salvatore at Monte Amiata, mentioning an abbot Peter of the Lombards: CHAZELLE, *The Codex* (n. 10), pp. 319-320 and plate II, p. 560. Whether the manuscript did in fact reach the papal see in Rome (Ceolfrith having died at Langres on his way towards the holy city) remains contested; see R. MARSDEN, *Amiatinus in Italy: The Afterlife of an Anglo-Saxon Book*, in H. SAUER – J. STOREY – G. WAXENBERGER (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent* (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 394), Tempe, AZ, ACMRS, 2011, 217-243, but also CHAZELLE, *The Codex*, pp. 3-4, 9-10.

12. P. MEYVAERT, *Bede's Capitula lectionum for the Old and New Testaments*, in *RBen* 105 (1995) 348-380, pp. 366-369; Bede included his biblical *capitula* in the list of his writings at the end of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.24, ed. and transl. B. COLGRAVE – R.A.B. MYNORS, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1969, p. 358 [hereafter *HE*].

13. *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* 14.10 (CCSL 121, 64); transl. L.T. MARTIN, *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Cistercian Studies Series, 117), Kalamazoo, MI, Cistercian Publications, 1989, p. 126.

with a term from its use in liturgical contexts (where texts were recited in their Old Latin forms) might detrimentally affect a copyist's choice of language¹⁴. Bede's reputation rests of course on his ability to communicate his knowledge of the Fathers through his writings, but we should never forget the role played by the wider monastic community in which he spent his whole life in forming him as a scholar particularly alert to the language of Scripture and the nuances of its expression¹⁵.

Bede articulated the principles that underpinned his exegetical work at various points in his writings, frequently in introductory prefaces that took an epistolary form. My title and opening quotation come not from one of Bede's New Testament commentaries, but rather from the preface to one of his mature Old Testament works, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*. Dedicated to his patron and diocesan bishop, Acca of Hexham, *On Ezra* was probably written during the second half of the 720s, while Bede worked simultaneously on his *Retractatio* on Acts, and on commentaries *On the Temple* and *On Mark*, as well as in compiling his *Martyrology*, and composing the work for which he is best known today, his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. By this stage of his career, he had developed into an experienced biblical commentator, with an established method and clear understanding of the purpose of elucidating the hidden meaning of Scripture.

The imagery of peeling back the outer layers of a text to discover its hidden, inner core is one that Bede inherited from earlier generations of patristic and classical scholars. Jerome had seen the letter of the biblical text as a shell which needs to be broken in order to reach the core; as he wrote in a letter to Paulinus of Nola, quoting Plautus:

Hear me, therefore, my fellow-servant, my friend, my brother; give ear for a moment that I may tell you how you are to walk in the holy Scriptures. All that we read in the divine books, while glistening and shining without, is yet far sweeter within. "He who desires to eat the kernel must first break the nut"¹⁶.

14. *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum* 2.1 (CCSL 121, 109); MEYVAERT, *Bede the Scholar* (n. 7), p. 49; MARSDEN, *The Text* (n. 8), p. 215.

15. C. O'BRIEN reflected on the importance of recognising the influence of Bede's life in community in the final chapter of his *Bede's Temple: An Image and Its Interpretation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 194-206.

16. Jerome, *Epistula* 58.9, ed. I. HILBERG, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, 3 vols. (CSEL, 54-56), Wien, Tempsky; Leipzig, Freytag, 1910-1918, I, p. 538; quoting Plautus, *Curculio* 1.1.55; H. DE LUBAC, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 3 vols., Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans; Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998-2009, II, transl. E.M. Macierowski, 2000, p. 59; originally published as *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture* (2 pts in 4 vols., Paris, Aubier, 1959-64).

The immediate source for Bede's phrase is Gregory's *Moralia* on Job, in a passage commenting on an episode from Genesis. That describes how Jacob set up wooden rods from which he had partially peeled the bark beside the water troughs where the flocks came to drink (and also to breed), and thus ensured that the females, having looked on striped sticks while conceiving, gave birth to young that were striped, speckled, and spotted and so belonged to his portion and not to Laban's¹⁷. Gregory explained that the rods signify the lives and sentences of the Ancient Fathers in Holy Scripture which, set in a right line, can be called rods.

And when from those same the bark of the letter (*cortex litterae*) is removed, the interior whiteness of the allegory is brought to view, and when the bark is left, the green grown examples of the outward meaning are shown¹⁸.

Bede's adoption of the same image of the bark of the letter makes the same distinction as had Gregory between the literal meaning of the scriptural text, the historical details of the biblical narrative, and its spiritual or allegorical meaning, which conveys the deeper theological truths hidden below the bark of the letters of the text.

To Bede, nothing in Scripture was without significance, all had spiritual importance even (as he said in his *Retractatio* on Acts) the names and positions of places¹⁹. He spelt this out in his commentary on Genesis,

The whole course of sacred Scripture is full of mystical figures, and not only in words and deeds, but also in those places and times in which it is enacted, in accordance with the statement of the Apostle that "all these things happened to them in figure and they are written for our sake" (1 Cor 10,11)²⁰.

Following Gregory the Great, Bede defended the importance of reflecting on hidden meaning by noting that Christ himself had taught in parables;

17. Gen 30,37-39. In his own commentary on Genesis, Bede did not get beyond the story of Abraham; he never commented on these verses directly in his own exegesis.

18. Gregory, *Moralia* 21.1.2.34, ed. M. ADRIAEN, *S. Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob*, 3 vols. (CCSL, 143-143B), Turnhout, Brepols, 1979-85, p. 1064.

19. *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum* 10.5-6 (CCSL 121, 139-140): *Omnia plena figuris spiritalibus in scriptura sancta, etiam nomina et positio locorum*. Cf. G.H. BROWN, *Bede the Venerable*, Boston, MA, Twayne, 1987, p. 45.

20. *Liber quatuor in principium Genesis* 3.14.14c-15, ed. C.W. JONES, *Opera exegetica 1: Libri quatuor in principium Genesis usque ad nativitatem Isaac et eiectionem Israhel adnotationum* (CCSL, 118A), Turnhout, Brepols, 1967, p. 188: *Cuncta sacri eloquii series mysticis est plena figuris, nec tantum dictis et factis, sed et ipsis in quibus agitur locis ac temporibus congruit illud apostolicum, quia omnia in figura contingebant illis, scripta sunt autem propter nos*; transl. C.B. KENDALL, *On Genesis: Bede*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2008, p. 265. Cf. *De tabernaculo* 1.5-9 (CCSL 119A, 5); *De templo* 1.2.1 (CCSL 119A, 148). R. RAY, *What Do We Know about Bede's Commentaries?*, in *Recherches de théologies ancienne et médiévale* 49 (1982) 5-20, pp. 16-18.

he himself had explained the parable of the sower figuratively in order to show the disciples how to look below the surface to find the hidden meaning²¹. Some of Bede's minor works, such as *On the Holy Places* or the gazetteers of biblical places that he appended to his commentaries *On the First Part of Samuel* and *On Acts*, demonstrated his awareness of the importance of locating accurately the events that Scripture described. As one who had never travelled beyond the bounds of his native Northumbrian kingdom, Bede showed a keen awareness of the benefit of texts that assist readers who "live at a great distance from the places where the patriarchs and apostles lived and whose only source of information about them lies in books"²².

Bede tailored his approach to all the Scriptures on which he commented with a sensitive awareness of the needs (and intellectual limitations) of his anticipated audience. As he noted at the end of the preface to the first of his commentaries, that *On Revelation*, which he dedicated to his own abbot, Hwætberht:

Aware as I am of the sloth of our race (that is the English) which not long ago, in fact in the time of Pope Gregory the blessed, received the seed of faith and has cultivated it rather lukewarmly as far as reading is concerned, I decided not only to throw light on what the text says, but also to compress its meaning. For plain brevity usually makes a greater impression on the memory than wordy disputation²³.

However much he might have rejoiced in finding and explaining mystical or allegorical meanings in the text, he never forgot its literal and historical meaning²⁴. Set against his total written output, the corpus of Bede's writing on the New Testament is relatively small; it includes both scriptural books for which commentaries already existed and texts not previously explored. In the first category are his earliest commentary, *On Revelation*, that on

21. Bede, *In Lucae euangelium expositio* 3.8.4-5, ed. D. HURST, *Opera exegetica 3: In Lucae euangelium expositio. In Marci euangelium expositio* (CCSL, 120), Turnhout, Brepols, 1960, p. 173, quoting Gregory, *Homelia in euangelium* 15, ed. R. ÉTAIX (CCSL, 141), Turnhout, Brepols, 1999, p. 104.

22. *HE* 5.15, ed. COLGRAVE – MYNORS, pp. 508-509.

23. *Expositio apocalypseos*, preface, ed. R. GRAYSON, *Opera exegetica 5: Explanatio Apocalypseos* (CCSL, 121A), Turnhout, Brepols, 2001, p. 233: *Nostrae siquidem, id est Anglorum gentis inertiae consulendum ratus, quae et non dudum, id est temporibus beati papae Gregorii, semen accepit fidei, et idem quantum ad lectionem tepide satis excoluit, non solum dilucidare sensus, uerum sententias quoque stringere disposui*; transl. F. WALLIS, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013, p. 106.

24. *In Genesim* 1.1 (CCSL 118A, 3): *Sed diligenter intuendum ut ita quisque sensibus allegoricis studium impendat, quatenus apertam historiae fidem allegorizando derelinquat*. Cf. *In Lucam* 2.10.29 (CCSL 120, 222): *Neque enim ita proximum quem sicut nos diligere iubemur super Christo interpretari debemus ut moralia mutuae fraternitatis instituta sub allegoriae regulis extenuare et auferre conemur*.

Luke's gospel and a book of excerpts from the Pauline epistles. Bede did not attempt an independent exegesis of any of Paul's letters, but simply made excerpts from the thematic collection of Augustine's writings on Paul made by Eugippius in the sixth century. He rearranged these in the order of Paul's writings (not by theme), thereby making the work much more useful as a point of reference and perhaps, as we shall see, shedding some light on his own methods in commenting on Scripture²⁵. He broke new ground in writing a commentary on the seven Catholic Epistles (a work in which he devoted a good deal of attention toward the correction of the errors of heresy, especially that of the Pelagians). None of the Latin Fathers had written a commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (and it seems unlikely that John Chrysostom's Greek commentary was known in the Latin west); he did however know a verse commentary by the sixth-century poet, Arator²⁶. Bede's decision to write on this text reflects the enduring interest that he showed across his entire career in the work of mission and evangelism and the deeds of the apostles who carried the faith away from Jerusalem and Judaea. This work, as we shall see, he completed fairly early in his career, but later – having acquired a copy of a bilingual manuscript of Acts from which he could correct his own Latin text – Bede wrote a second, shorter *Retraction*, correcting some errors he had made in the earlier text. There is a close relationship between the form and content of Luke's Acts and the way that Bede chose to describe the history of the church among his own people the English, whose conversion he saw as completing the apostolic injunction to carry the faith to the ends of the earth²⁷. Late in his career Bede also wrote a commentary on Mark's gospel, another text on which no Latin commentary existed before his time.

At various points in his writings Bede drew attention to the gospels as scriptural texts of primary importance. For example, he interpreted the four wheels under the mobile basins used for ritual washing in the Temple courtyard as representing the four books of the gospels²⁸:

which are very aptly compared to wheels because, just as the wheel's whirling motions can travel with the greatest rapidity wherever it is steered, so with the Lord's help, through the instrumentality of the apostles, the word of the Gospel

25. THACKER, *Bede and the Ordering of Understanding* (n. 3), pp. 53-54. P.-I. FRANSEN, *Description de la collection de Bède le vénérable sur l'apôtre*, in *RBen* 71 (1961) 22-70.

26. *Expositio Actuum*, preface (CCSL 121, 3); MARTIN, *Bede: Commentary on Acts* (n. 13), pp. xviii, xxvii-xxxi (Introduction).

27. RAY, *What Do We Know about Bede's Commentaries?* (n. 20), pp. 19-20; J. O'REILLY, *Introduction*, in *Bede: On the Temple*, transl. S. CONNOLLY, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1995, pp. xxxiii-xxxix.

28. Bede, *De templo* 2.20.7 (CCSL 119A, 217); transl. CONNOLLY, p. 97.

filled all the regions of the world in a short space; as the wheel raises from the earth the chariot laid upon it, and when raised carries it where the driver steers it, so the preaching of the Gospel lifts up the minds of the elect from earthly cravings to heavenly desires and having lifted them up, guides them to progress in good works or to the ministry of preaching, in whichever direction the helping grace of the Spirit wills.

In similar fashion, interpreting Peter's vision of the sheet on which were all the unclean animals of the earth, Bede saw the four corners of the linen sheet as depicting both the four regions of the world to which the church extends, but also as "figures of the evangelists, through whom the church is nourished and exalted with heavenly gifts"²⁹. The preface to his commentary on Acts expressed particular admiration for the work of the evangelists³⁰:

Mark and Luke wrote at a time when they could be judged, not only by the church of Christ but also by those apostles who still remained in the flesh. For through the Lord's will it was brought about that the words and deeds of Christ were put together in written form, not only by the apostles who saw Christ, but also by disciples who learned of him by hearing, so that subsequent teachers in the church might be supplied with confidence and authority for preaching and writing about those things which they had not seen.

These passages remind us of the supreme importance that Bede placed on the testimony of the gospels, but they also serve to re-emphasise the point already made about Bede's enduring interest in the process of evangelisation, both the taking of the gospel to gentile peoples (especially those dwelling in the isles of the sea) and also his concern for the continuing work of teaching and preaching in the church of his own day.

Bede laid considerable stress on the importance of the relationship between the Scriptures (the law and the gospel as he often described them), but not in a simplistic chronological or supercessionist sense. He frequently drew attention to the connections between the two testaments, particularly the christological prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures, as for example in his discussion of the etymology of Hebrew names, showing how a message of salvation in Christ Jesus was already to be read in the pages of the Old Testament³¹. For him, both testaments testified to Christ as redeemer of humankind but from different

29. *Expositio Actuum* 10.11b (CCSL 121, 50); transl. MARTIN, p. 97.

30. *Expositio Actuum*, preface (CCSL 121, 5); transl. MARTIN, p. 5.

31. D. FLEMING, *Jesus That Is Hælend: Hebrew Names and the Vernacular Savior in Anglo-Saxon England*, in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112 (2013) 26-47. See F. ROBINSON, *The Significance of Names in Old English Literature*, in *Anglia* 86 (1968) 14-58; cf. C. JENKINS, *Bede as Exegete and Theologian*, in THOMPSON (ed.), *Bede: His Life, Times and Writings* (n. 3), 152-200.

perspectives³². As he wrote in *On Revelation*, explaining the verse in chapter 5 about the visionary's sight of God enthroned, holding a book in his right hand:

This vision shows the mysteries of Holy Scripture, made plain to us by the incarnation of the Lord; its harmonious unity contains the Old Testament on the outside, so to speak and the New [Testament] within³³.

Bede traced his own understanding of the harmony between the two testaments back to his childhood and the images that decorated the walls of the abbey church at Jarrow. Bede's first abbot, Benedict Biscop, had brought back from one of his many visits to Rome pictures of the story of the Lord with which to decorate the church of St Paul, images that illustrated the harmony (*concordia*) of the Old and New Testaments whose composition was superbly well thought out (*summa ratione*):

For example, the picture of Isaac carrying the wood on which he was to be burnt as a sacrifice was placed immediately below that of Christ carrying the cross on which he was about to suffer. Similarly, the Son of Man lifted up on the cross was paired with the serpent raised by Moses in the desert³⁴.

There is thus a degree of artificiality in separating out Bede's exegetical writings on the New Testament from those on the Old, because he applied similar methods across all his biblical writings. For him, as he had learned from Augustine and other earlier commentators, what the Old Testament anticipated had been fulfilled in the New³⁵. Much of his exegesis of New Testament as much as Old Testament Scripture served to bring out the consistency of divine intention across time³⁶; therefore the methods that he devised for the interpretation of Scripture (and taught his own students to deploy) applied equally to the Old as to the New Testament. Bede's various

32. A.G. HOLDER, *Bede and the New Testament*, in DEGREGORIO (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (n. 5), 142-155, p. 143.

33. *Expositio apocalypseos* 5.1 (CCSL 121A, 277); transl. WALLIS, p. 136.

34. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 9, ed. and transl. GROCOCK – WOOD (n. 3), pp. 44-45. He also understood a typological relationship to exist between the two sets of pictures that adorned the walls of the church at Wearmouth, one set of which related to the gospels and Christ's Incarnation and the other concerned the Apocalypse (*Historia abbatum*, ch. 6, pp. 36-7). As WALLIS has argued, linking two images one of a gospel scene and another from Revelation through typological arrangement of the panels, shows that the prophecy of revelation is as relevant to the past and to the present as to the future, *Bede: On Revelation* (n. 23), p. 37; cf. P. DARBY, *Bede and the End of Time* (Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland), Farnham – Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2012, pp. 219-221.

35. DE LUBAC, *Medieval Exegesis* (n. 16), I, transl. M. Sebanc, 1998, pp. 225-268; cf. Bede, *De tabernaculo* 2.6 (CCSL 119A, 63); transl. A.G. HOLDER, *Bede: On the Tabernacle*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1994, p. 70.

36. C. O'BRIEN, *Bede on the Jewish Church*, in P.D. CLARKE – C. METHUEN (eds.), *The Church on Its Past* (Studies in Church History, 49), Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2013, 63-73.

writings on the Temple, including both his commentary of that title and *On Ezra* make this point explicit. For Bede, the church in which he ministered as a servant of Christ (*famulus Christi*) for the whole of his adult life had a specific, pre-ordained part to play in God's much larger plan for salvation, which extended back before the Incarnation into the days of Ancient Israel³⁷. In that wider story, he laid a particular emphasis on the importance of the work of apostles, those sent by God to carry the message of the gospels far away from Israel to gentile peoples dispersed across the known world.

BEDE'S APPROACH TO SCRIPTURE

Before going further, it is important to place Bede's exegetical work in the context of his life. By his own account, he spent the entirety of his life in the monastic house at Wearmouth and Jarrow from the age of seven until his 59th year (when, in 731 he completed his *History*). His deep familiarity with Scripture arose centrally from the daily offices around which all aspects of life in cloister revolved. For him and his monastic contemporaries for whom he mostly wrote, liturgy was the primary context in which to hear, read and understand the word of God. The monastic liturgy was constructed almost entirely from texts from the Bible (apart from the Matins office, which also included readings from the Fathers). Bede's immersion in that aural world went back to his childhood, as he wrote in the autobiographical statement inserted at the end of his *History*³⁸:

From the time my relatives put me into the charge of Abbot Benedict and then of Ceolfrith to be educated, I have spent all my life in this monastery, applying myself entirely to the study of the Scriptures. Amid the observance of the discipline of the Rule and the daily task of singing in the church, it has always been my delight to learn or to teach, or to write.

The office was not, however, the only formative influence in shaping his thinking about Scripture. As Marie Anne Mayeski has pointed out, we should not forget the importance of the Eucharist in this regard. The eucharistic lectionary already involves a degree of interpretation, embedding the principle of typology, by drawing connections between Old Testament Scriptures, New Testament epistles and the gospels³⁹.

37. S. FOOT, *Bede's Church* (Jarrow Lecture 2012), Jarrow, St Paul's House, 2013), p. 7.

38. *HE* 5.24, ed. COLGRAVE – MYNORS, pp. 566-567.

39. M.A. MAYESKI, *Reading the Word in a Eucharistic Context: The Shape and Methods of Early Medieval Exegesis*, in L. LARSON-MILLER (ed.), *Medieval Liturgy: A Book of Essays*, New York, Garland, 1997, 61-84, pp. 61-63.

Bede's approach to all Scripture thus came first from the daily experience of its use in worship; its words were constantly on his lips as he sang in the choir⁴⁰. His education in the monastery (modelled on the principles of Christian teaching established by Augustine and developed by Cassiodorus) had been directed to the goal of developing the Christian spirit through deeper understanding of Scripture. All learning, from the elementary stages of memorizing the Psalter to more advanced exegesis, centred on the Bible; the teaching of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric was done through study of scriptural texts⁴¹. A further significant formation came, as we have already seen, from Bede's involvement in aspects of his community's endeavours in creating three pandects, containing whole Bibles. "Holy Scripture surpasses all other writings", he wrote at the outset of his *On Schemes and Tropes*, "not merely in authority because it is divine, or in usefulness because it leads to eternal life, but also for its age and artistic composition". He went on to explain that there are no examples of rhetorical eloquence found in secular texts which had not appeared first in Holy Scripture⁴². While both exegesis and history provided routes into understanding the wonder of God's salvation, exegesis provided the better method, because Sacred Scripture determined its content⁴³.

When Bede wrote a tract *On Orthography* (in fact an alphabetical listing of common Latin words giving their meanings, peculiarities, synonyms and, where appropriate, Greek derivations), or produced a guide to figures of speech and tropes, he took all of his illustrative material from Scripture. Bede told his readers repeatedly that the books of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, but perhaps above all the gospels are "the bread of life"⁴⁴. "Only if we are refreshed with this food of God's word may we hope safely to go through the ways of this life" he wrote in his commentary *On Mark*⁴⁵. He observed that only some spiritual teachers have been given the power and learning to penetrate the meanings of Scripture; just as the disciples

40. B. WARD, *The Venerable Bede*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1990, p. 41.

41. M.T.A. CARROLL, *The Venerable Bede: His Spiritual Teachings* (Studies in Mediaeval History, 9), Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1946, pp. 18-19.

42. Bede, *De Schematibus et Tropis* 1, ed. and transl. C.B. KENDALL, *Bede Libri II De Arte Metrica et De Schematibus et Tropis* (Bibliotheca Germanica, series nova 2), Saarbrücken, AQ-Verlag, 1991, pp. 168-169 [hereafter *DST*].

43. A.G. HOLDER, *Allegory and History in Bede's Interpretation of Sacred Architecture*, in *American Benedictine Review* 40 (1989) 115-131, p. 116.

44. Bede, *In Marcum* 2.7.27-28 (CCSL 120, 524): *Mensa quippe est scriptura sancta quae nobis panem uitae ministrat.*

45. *In Marcum* 1.2.24 (CCSL 120, 462): *Esuriunt in satis cum in eisdem sacris eloquiis quae legendo pertranseunt panem uitae inuenire desiderant*; CARROLL, *The Venerable Bede* (n. 41), p. 23.

gathered up the remaining fragments of bread and fish after the feeding of the five thousand, so those teachers “are ordered both to gather up by meditating [on them] the obscure points of the scriptures which the crowd is unable [to understand] on its own, and to preserve the results of their meditation and [the Lord’s] commandments in their writings for their own use as well as that of the crowds”⁴⁶.

METHOD

In the writing of biblical exegesis, Bede argued, the scholar needs interpretative tools to identify the significance of the sacred text’s figurative language. He wrote a manual of hermeneutics called *On Schemes and Tropes* to explain to his students both how the language of Scripture can be arranged artificially into what the Greeks call *schema*, and also how understanding the use of metaphorical language, or tropes, can serve as a valuable analytical tool for uncovering hidden meaning. A *schema* he explained is “an artificial arrangement of words; in Latin one would describe it as a habit or an adornment or a figure because in using these devices ‘language is so to speak clothed or adorned’”⁴⁷.

In explaining the different schemes that one might deploy in writing in Latin, Bede turned overwhelmingly to verses from the Psalms in order to illustrate his points. We may assume that he did so not only because these were the words that he had most readily on his lips, but because he knew that they would be instantly familiar to his pupils. So, to take his first example, *prolepsis*, which he defined as anticipation, or setting before, that is the figure of speech when what ought to come after is put before, he chose as his example the verse where the psalmist says (Ps 86,1-2): “His foundations are in the holy mountains; the Lord loves the gates of Sion”. As he explained, here the psalmist has placed the word “his” (*eius*) first and before defining whose foundations these were, namely the Lord’s. He made comparison also with Ps 22,19: “They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots” (instead of “they cast lots upon my vesture”)⁴⁸.

Only at a few points in this teaching manual did Bede deploy passages from the New Testament to illustrate his points. Explaining the difference

46. Bede, *Homelia 2.2*, ed. D. HURST, *Opera homiletica. Opera rhythmica* (CCSL, 122), Turnhout, Brepols, 1955, p. 198; transl. L.T. MARTIN – D. HURST, *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, 2 vols., Kalamazoo, MI, Cistercian Publications, 1991, II, p. 20.

47. *DST* 1, pp. 168-169.

48. *Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea; et super vestem meam miserunt sortem.*

between *zeugma*, the completing of a number of dependent constructions with a single verb or clause, and its antithesis, *hypozeuxis*, when you give a separate verb to each separate clause, he chose a passage from the letter to the Ephesians (4,31) to illustrate the former: “Let all bitterness and anger and indignation and clamour and blasphemy be put away (*tollatur*) from you” and for its opposite, a verse from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13,8): “Whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed”⁴⁹. To illustrate word-play, *paronomasia*, he chose an example from Philippians (3,2-3): “Beware of evil workers, beware of the *concision*. For we are the *circumcision* who in spirit serve God”⁵⁰. And for the figure of repeating the same word but in different cases (*polyptoton*), he took an example from the letter to the Romans (11,36): “For of him [*ipso*] and by him [*ipsum*] and in him [*ipso*] are all things; to him [*ipsi*] be glory for ever”⁵¹. The lack of examples from the gospels we might most readily explain because of the relative simplicity of a good deal of their language, at least that of the synoptic gospels, yet it is still striking how little recourse Bede had to the texts of the epistles and how much he turned naturally to the psalms to illustrate those points he wanted to explain.

When he turned to tropes, he did draw on a wider range of biblical texts to find illustrations, although the psalms still predominate here as well. A trope, Bede explained, “is an expression which, either for the sake of ornamentation or from necessity, has been transferred from its proper meaning and understood by analogy in a sense which it does not have”⁵². Thus, to explain metaphor, when words are transferred from one object to another, he took an example from Psalm 8: “All who walk in the paths of the sea”. He pointed how often such metaphors are applied to God, quoting Ps 16,8: “Protect me under the shadow of your wings”. To explain *synecdoche* (the representation of the whole by a part, or the part by the whole) he took the opening of John’s gospel, “the word was made flesh”; and, for the alternative use, a passage from John’s narrative of the aftermath of the crucifixion (19,42): “there, because of the preparation Day of the Jews, they laid Jesus [i.e. his body only] because the tomb was near at hand”. When he needed to illustrate *onomatopoeia*, a word created from its sound, he took St Paul’s image of a tinkling cymbal from his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13,1)⁵³.

49. *DST* 2-3, pp. 170-171.

50. *DST* 9, pp. 174-175.

51. *DST* 14, pp. 176, 179-180.

52. *DST* 1, pp. 168-169.

53. *DST*, pp. 188-191.

Bede had inherited from his patristic forebears (particularly Cassian, Augustine and Gregory) an understanding of the fourfold sense of Scripture, but he is generally credited with having gone further than his predecessors in developing and explaining this method of finding deeper meanings beneath the literal, or historical interpretation of the text⁵⁴. He explained that, as well as interpreting the text historically, the exegete could appeal to three additional, spiritual meanings each relating to one of the virtues. Allegory taught about the church and what it should believe (thus corresponding to the virtue of faith); a moral interpretation, teaching individual believers how they should behave, would correspond to the virtue of love, whereas an anagogical, or mystical explanation would point to the future and waken expectation, so representing hope⁵⁵. This was not to deny that the words of Scripture had a meaning in the historical context in which they were first composed, but to argue that the same words also carried implicit meanings, meanings that might only be understood by later audiences⁵⁶. On occasion, a single verse of the Bible, or even one specific historical example or verbal allegory, could carry all four senses simultaneously. For example, as Bede explained in his *On Tropes*, the temple of the Lord could refer literally to the building built by Solomon, allegorically to Christ's body, morally to the faithful (in whom dwells the spirit of God), or mystically to the heavenly mansions⁵⁷. In similar fashion he explained how two verses from Psalm 147 (Ps 147,12-13: "Praise the Lord O Jerusalem; praise your God O Sion. Because he has strengthened the bolts of your gates, he has blessed your children within you") can refer literally to the citizens of the earthly Jerusalem, allegorically to the church of Christ, typologically to each saved soul, and mystically to the celestial homeland. In defending this plural interpretation Bede reminded his readers that in his *Moralia* on Job, Gregory often used the word allegory in relation to those verbal expressions and historical events which he interpreted figuratively as referring to Christ or the Church. These rhetorical devices served for Bede as valuable tools in mediating between the contradictions of earthly human experience and the harmony of the divine plan⁵⁸. They enabled him to explain the hidden meanings of

54. DE LUBAC, *Medieval Exegesis* (n. 16), I, transl. M. Sebanc, 1998, p. 664; DE GREGORIO, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (n. 1), pp. 1-2 n. 4.

55. D.C. STEINMETZ, *The Superiority of Pre-critical Exegesis*, in *Theology Today* 37 (1980) 27-38, p. 30; *DST*, p. 206.

56. STEINMETZ, *The Superiority* (n. 55), p. 32.

57. *DST*, pp. 198 and 207.

58. C.B. KENDALL, *Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica: The Rhetoric of Faith*, in J.J. MURPHY (ed.), *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, Berkeley, CA – Los Angeles, CA – London, University of California Press, 1978, 145-172, p. 162.

Scripture in ways that brought to light “those things that seemed to be treated mystically or stated somewhat obscurely”, as he said in his preface to his commentary *On Acts*⁵⁹.

FOLLOWING IN OTHERS’ FOOTSTEPS

Bede’s debt to those who had preceded him in the intellectual task of interpreting Scripture may be summarised in the phrase that he repeated in several of his commentaries “following in the footsteps of the fathers” (*patrum uestigia sequens*)⁶⁰. At the end of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede described his literary endeavours in terms that emphasised his debt to others, declaring that ever since his ordination to the priesthood he had made it his business, for his own benefit and that of his brothers, “to make brief extracts from the works of the venerable fathers on the holy scriptures”, or to add notes of his own “to clarify their sense and interpretation”⁶¹. In his first completed commentary, that on the Revelation to John, Bede acknowledged the extent to which his interpretations of the text depended on those of Tyconius, crediting him with offering an explanation “in a truthful and sufficiently catholic fashion”, even while deploring his adherence to Donatism. On occasions where he had omitted Tyconius’ explanations “for the sake of brevity”, Bede sought to add as far as he could “from material handed down from our teachers, or from recollecting what we have read or even from the resources of our own understanding”. “For we have it from the commandments”, he said (quoting Matt 25,27), “that we should repay to the Lord the talent which we have received with interest”⁶².

Bede wrote at some length in his commentary *On Ezra* about the debt owed by priests in his own day to “those teachers who have preceded them

59. *Expositio Actuum*, preface (CCSL 121, 3).

60. R. RAY, *Who Did Bede Think He Was?*, in DEGREGORIO (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition* (n. 3), 11–36. Texts in which Bede used the expression *patrum uestigia sequens* (or close variants) include: *Expositio Actuum*, preface (CCSL 121, 3); *In primam partem Samuhelis libri IIII* prologue, ed. D. HURST, *Opera exegetica 2. In primam partem Samuhelis libri IIII. In Regum librum XXX quaestiones* (CCSL, 119), Turnhout, Brepols, 1962, p. 10; *De templo* 1.16.7 (CCSL 119A, 191); *In Cantica canticorum*, prologue and book VI, line 4, ed. D. HURST – J.E. HUDSON, *Opera exegetica 2B: In Tobiam. In Proverbia. In Cantica canticorum. In Habacuc* (CCSL, 119B), Turnhout, Brepols, 1983, pp. 180 and 359; *De temporum ratione* 5, ed. C.W. JONES, *Opera didascalica 2: De temporum ratione* (CCSL, 123B), Turnhout, Brepols, 1977, p. 287; and *Homelia* 2.11 (quoted below, n. 64).

61. Bede, *HE* 5.24, ed. COLGRAVE – MYNORS, pp. 566–567: *Ex quo tempore accepti presbyteratus usque ad annum aetatis meae LVIII haec in scripturam sanctam meae meorum que necessitati ex opusculis uenerabilium patrum breuiter adnotare, siue etiam ad formam sensus et interpretationis eorum superadicere curauit.*

62. *Expositio apocalypseos*, preface (CCSL 121A, 233); transl. WALLIS, p. 105.

in the confession of Christ that they might be instructed and united with the members of the Church". He drew particular attention to the former Senator, Cassiodorus, "who suddenly became a Doctor of the Church. ... For when he carefully examined in his outstanding commentary on the Psalms what Ambrose, Hilary, Augustine, Cyril, John, and the other Fathers have said, he showed beyond doubt that he was educated by the 'elders of the Jews', i.e. by those who confessed and praised God"⁶³. In many of his biblical commentaries Bede used the phrase "following in the footsteps of the fathers" to summarise his method, as for example he planned to do when compiling a commentary on Luke even though, as he explained in his preface to his commentary *On Acts*, he had not yet managed to complete that task. The same expression occurs also in his homilies. For example, in one sermon for the period after Easter on John 16,5-15, Bede offered a close-focused reading of the eleven verses of his pericope before offering a hortatory conclusion. That began⁶⁴:

But because by the Lord's gift, we have completed our explanation of the reading from the holy gospel, following in the footsteps of the fathers, there remains [the task] of advising your fraternity, dearly beloved, along with myself, always to keep the remembrance of it [in our minds] with solicitous concentration, to explore its sweetness with faithful hearts, and to ruminate upon it frequently with chaste mouth.

The identity of those fathers in whose feet Bede claimed to tread might now seem obvious to us, but we should remember that the idea that the Latin church produced only four doctors was not fixed until the last decade of the thirteenth century⁶⁵. Bede played an important role in the early stages of the establishment of a patristic canon, in part following the example set by Pope Gregory the Great (on whom Bede probably depended more than any other single authority)⁶⁶, but in ways that are also sufficiently original that Bede himself was recognised among the Fathers only a short time after

63. *In Ezram et Neemiam* 2.6.8 (CCSL 119A, 295); transl. DE GREGORIO, pp. 89-90; cf. MEYVAERT, *Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus* (n. 9), p. 828.

64. *Homelia* 2.11 (CCSL 122, 258): *Sed quia donante domino lectionem sancti euangelii patrum uestigia sequentes exponendo transcurrimus restat uestram fraternitatem, carissimi, me cum pariter ammonere ut eius memoriam sollicita semper intentione seruemus eius suauitatem et deuoto pectore scrutemur et casto saepius ore rulinemus*; transl. MARTIN – HURST, II, p. 105.

65. B. KACZYNSKI, *Bede's Commentaries on Luke and Mark and the Formation of a Patristic Canon*, in S. ECHARD – G. WIELAND (eds.), *Anglo-Latin Literature and Its Heritage: Anglo-Latin and Its Heritage Essays in Honour of A.G. Rigg on His 64th Birthday* (Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin, 4), Turnhout, Brepols, 2001, 17-26, p. 18; RAY, *Who Did Bede Think He Was?* (n. 60), p. 12.

66. S. DE GREGORIO, *The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: Exegetical Connections, Spiritual Departures, in Early Medieval Europe* 18 (2010) 43-60.

his death. Alcuin, for example, named Bede as the fifth father⁶⁷. Bede was the first to arrange the principal Latin Fathers in a group of four: Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory, which he did in the preface to his commentary *On Luke*, a work that he wrote perhaps between 710 and 715. It is worth pausing to spend a little time on the preface to this text, since it explains a good deal about Bede's working methods.

WRITING GOSPEL COMMENTARIES

The longest of Bede's New Testament commentaries, *On Luke*, was first commissioned by Acca, bishop of Hexham, soon after 703, but writing the text proved far from straightforward. Bede clearly had considerable doubts as to the wisdom of attempting such an enterprise and prevaricated over a prolonged period before eventually completing it. As Bede summarised his bishop's advice, Acca had written him a number of letters in which he exhorted the young man not to allow the keenness of his mind to "dawdle and doze in slothful leisure, but that watchful and unwearied" he should "eagerly pursue daily meditation on and investigation of the scriptures". Having read his reflections *On Revelation*, the bishop had asked if he would produce an explanation of the Gospel of Luke, but Bede explained that sadly he had not yet been able to accomplish that task "because I have been hindered by the demands of annoying matters of which you are very much aware". In the meantime, Bede chose to send his bishop a little work (*opusculum*), *On the Acts of the Apostles*, which he had just finished, sending it in corrected form on "little parchments" (*membranulae*).

He went on to explain why he had failed to complete his work on Luke, offering two excuses: that he was *perterritus*, overawed (even terrified) by the task; and that he was tied up (*praepeditus*) by some hostile circumstances (*obstreperentes causae*) of which he knew Acca to be aware. These tumultuously hostile circumstances can only be the charge of heresy levelled against him by some followers of Acca's predecessor, Wilfrid. They alleged that in another of his early texts, *On Times*, Bede had re-dated the Lord's Incarnation to make it occur before the sixth age of the world⁶⁸. He thus sent the commentary *On Acts* and one on an epistle of John (probably *1 John*)

67. Alcuin, *Epistola* 216, ed. E. DÜMMLER, *MGH Epistolae IV: Epistolae Karolini Aevi II*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1895, p. 360; quoted by RAY, *Who Did Bede Think He Was?* (n. 60), p. 13.

68. F. WALLIS, *Why Did Bede Write a Commentary on Revelation?*, in EAD. – P. DARBY (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland), Farnham, Ashgate, 2014, 23-45, p. 28.

to placate his patron during the period when he had not succeeded in writing that on Luke.

When at length, Bede did complete his account of Luke, he supplied a copy of one of Bishop Acca's letters as part of its prologue. Acca's words served to demonstrate that he, Bede, had written this commentary because of the esteem that Acca had for him, and to fulfil the need of the unlearned for a commentary in a simpler style (*simplicior stilo*). Bede came up with various trumped up reasons to explain why he could not complete the task his bishop had set him: that Ambrose had previously written a better commentary; that Bede might be thought a plagiarist (*compilator*, i.e. one who gathered together the thoughts of others); or because he feared that he "would be thought to compose new things to replace the study of old writers"; or even – this clearly a last resort – he wondered at the value of writing a fresh commentary on a book for which there was already an exegetical explanation, when so many books of the Bible still awaited interpretation. Acca demolished each of these arguments in summary fashion, reminding him that other authors also drew on the writings of their predecessors, and emphasising that "there are certain sections in blessed Ambrose's exposition so eloquent and elevated that they can only be understood by the more learned, but not by the uneducated and the disdainful readers (*a rudibus uero fastidiosiusue lectoribus*) of the present age"⁶⁹. Further, Acca observed that Augustine had done something very similar, when in his Letter to Paulina, *De videndo deo*, he had taken a portion of an Ambrose commentary, put it into the text of his letter, and then explained what it meant.

Bede's own preface to Luke, which he placed immediately after Acca's letter at the head of the commentary, sheds important light on his exegetical methods and his particular way of working, partly it would seem in an attempt to protect him against the sorts of criticisms he had anticipated, especially a charge of passing off the work of others as his own⁷⁰.

Soon after reading the letter of your holiness, I dedicated myself to the task you gave me. Thanks to the long rope of monastic servitude, I could do what I wanted and was at the same time *dictator*, *notarius* and *librarius*. Once the most famous and most worthy works of the fathers had been brought to me, I set out to determine what Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the most vigilant (the apostle of our people), Jerome the commentator on sacred history and

69. *In Lucam*, prologue (CCSL 120, 5). As Joseph Kelly has noted, this passage is striking for what he reveals about how much Bede worked alone, not interacting with other scholars on a routine basis: KELLY, *On the Brink* (n. 2), p. 90.

70. *In Lucam*, prologue (CCSL 120, 7); transl. M. GORMAN, *Source Marks and Chapter Divisions in Bede's Commentary on Luke*, in *RBen* 112 (2002) 246-275, pp. 258-259.

other fathers had thought and written about Luke's gospel. As you had ordered me, I wrote down on slips of parchment (*schedulis*) either their exact words or my summaries of what they said. Since it was tiresome to insert their full names to indicate what each author had written, it was easier to write the first two letters of their names to indicate the source, entering the first letter in the margin at the beginning of each citation and the second letter at the end of each citation. I was worried that someone might say that I had stolen the sayings of the fathers and that I had composed these citations by myself. If by chance this work is considered worthy of being copied, by the Lord I beg and beseech my readers to remember to copy out these source marks which they will find in my exemplar.

Bede's use of marginal source marks as a means of acknowledging and indexing the authorities on which he depended (a practice that he advocated also in the preface to his commentary *On Mark*) has attracted a lot of attention among scholars; some, although not all, of the surviving manuscripts of these texts preserve these annotations⁷¹. For our purposes, when considering Bede's exegetical methods, it is more interesting to focus on the detail of this narrative about how he set putting this work together, especially the important insight that this offers into Bede's working methods before he got as far as inserting passages from the Fathers in his own text.

As he explained, when he read the sermons and commentaries of earlier Fathers, he worked as his own *notarius*, recording excerpts from their writings on small pieces, or slips of parchment, *schedulae*; what modern historians might once have called "dockets" (little slips of paper), or index cards. (*Schedula* is clearly the diminutive form for the noun *scheda*, which means either material for writing on, or something that has writing on it; perhaps these were parchment off-cuts from pages being prepared for manuscript books). The reference to having acted while working on Luke as his own *dictator* and *notarius* raises the possibility that there might have been other occasions when he could employ one or more assistants to whom he could dictate passages as he found them in the writings of the Fathers for them to transcribe onto parchment slips on his behalf. Presumably he and his scribes indexed these by scriptural passage, by patristic author, and perhaps even additionally by subject matter, or theological concern.

We may imagine that as Bede came to work through the text of Luke's gospel, he had a desk (or desks) in the scriptorium with his *schedulae* laid out in rows; as he approached each fresh verse, he would have had instantly

71. GORMAN, *Source Marks* (n. 70); M. STANSBURY, *Irish Biblical Exegesis*, in R. FLECHNER – S. MEEDER (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe: Identity, Culture, and Religion*, London, Palgrave, 2016, 116-130.

to hand the resources he needed to construct a rounded analysis. Once he had selected the relevant *schedula* from the sequence he could copy it out, acting as his own copyist or secretary, *librarius*. For example, when he came to the story of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16,19-31), he paused instantly over the language by which the rich man was described: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen". Purple he explained, is the colour of royal clothing, quoting passages from Isidore's *Etymologies* about how purple dye is extracted from marine molluscs, and going on to explain that *byssum* (fine linen), is a kind of flax that is especially white and soft, called *papaten* by the Greeks⁷². He went on to write a single sentence to warn about the dangers of undue wealth and the inevitability of the infernal torments that would be endured by those who displayed their wealth ostentatiously through wearing purple, before he turned to his *schedulae* and interpreted the whole of the rest of this parable by quoting Gregory's fortieth gospel homily (on this pericope), with the insertion in the middle of a single short passage from Augustine's *Questions on the Gospel of Luke*, which explained the significance of Lazarus' resting in the bosom of Abraham⁷³.

Bede's note-taking system conferred a double benefit on his labours. It enabled him to keep track of which patristic authority had said what in response to any individual scriptural verse, but it served also as a convenient way of noting parallels between different passages of Scripture. This method may go some way towards explaining why Bede proved able so consistently to illustrate arguments with scriptural passages; of course had deep familiarity with Scripture and a huge repertoire of verses knew by heart, but this preface proves that he devised an imaginative and individual system for rationalising the vast quantities of knowledge contained within the library of Wearmouth-Jarrow in a way that made it readily retrievable for him as the need arose.

Towards the end of his career, Bede wrote a commentary on a second gospel, that of Mark, writing again at the urging of Bishop Acca⁷⁴. This was a quite different project for, as far as Bede knew, no one had yet written a commentary on this, the shortest of the gospels. One early medieval commentary on this gospel, wrongly attributed to Jerome, may date from around

72. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 19.28.2, 4; 19.27.4, ed. W.M. LINDSAY, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum sive originum libri XX* (Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis), Oxford, Clarendon, 1911.

73. *In Lucam* 5.16.19-31 (CCSL 120, 302-307); quoting Gregory, *Homelia in euangelium* 40 (CCSL 141, 398-401).

74. *In Marcum*, prologue (CCSL 120, 432).

700. It shares a number of the same preoccupations as Bede's, but the similarities between the two texts probably arise more from the fact that both had recourse to the same works of Gregory the Great in compiling their exegetical interpretations, than that either author knew the work of the other⁷⁵. In some ways Mark appears a rather surprising text for Bede to have chosen for exegetical treatment. He will have known of Augustine's judgement of this gospel as little more than an abridgement of Matthew's⁷⁶, and he cannot have failed to notice that only two of Gregory the Great's forty gospel homilies addressed Marcan pericopes. That might have influenced his decision to tackle passages from Mark in only two of his own fifty gospel homilies⁷⁷. Given the particular reverence that Bede showed across all his writings for the authority and example of the apostles, Mark's gospel might also seem an unlikely choice; the bulk of the text portrays the disciples in a far from flattering light, showing them in one commentator's words as "uncomprehending and cowardly dunderheads"⁷⁸. We should bear in mind, however, that Bede did not recognise the longer ending of the final chapter of the gospel as a later addition, but considered it integral to Mark's text. Those additional verses, which describe Christ's post-resurrection appearances, his commissioning of the eleven to proclaim the gospel, and the ascension, go some way towards restoring the disciples' reputations⁷⁹.

While modern commentators tend to pay particular attention to those passages in each gospel that make it distinctive from the others, Bede's interest lay more in the agreement between the gospels and the way that all four together bore witness to the unfolding of the divine plan. Given how many parallels there are between Mark's gospel and those by Matthew and Luke, Bede was able to make significant use of commentaries on those texts in offering interpretations of Mark's account. So, he drew heavily on Jerome's commentary on Matthew and on his own earlier account of Luke, as well as on Augustine (*De consensu evangelistarum*) and on Gregory's homilies on the gospels and his commentary on Ezekiel. In order that no one might accuse him of attempting to pass off the work of others as his own, he marked passages drawn from the Fathers with marginal notations, in the

75. G.W. OLSEN, *The ecclesia primitiva in John Cassian, the Ps. Jerome commentary on Mark and Bede*, in C. LEONARDI – G. ORLANDI (eds.), *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, Firenze, Sismel, 2005, 5-27; W.T. FOLEY, *Bede's Exegesis of Passages Unique to the Gospel of Mark*, *ibid.*, 105-124, pp. 105-106.

76. Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1.2.4, ed. F. WEIHRICH (CSEL, 43), Wien, Tempsky, 1904, p. 4: *Marcus eum subsecutus tamquam pedisequus et breuiator eius uidetur.*

77. *Homelia* 1.1 and 2.6.

78. FOLEY, *Bede's Exegesis* (n. 75), p. 106.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

same way as he had done in his commentary on Luke. In the preface to that text he asked⁸⁰,

I humbly pray the reader if he should deem these works of ours worth copying, to carefully preserve in the transcribing the notation of those names which have been placed in the margins, just as was done in the commentary on St Luke that we, with the help of God's grace, composed many years ago.

BEDE'S EXEGETICAL METHODS IN PRACTICE

What can we say about Bede's methods? In each of his commentaries, he worked through the biblical text systematically in order according to the way that Jerome arranged the Vulgate *per cola et commata*, i.e. divided up into separate phrases to make it easier to read aloud. Bede tended to treat each verse, or small group of verses as a single unit, introducing each unit with a *lemma* supplying the scriptural text, or its opening words, before going on to offer on most occasions a single way of reading the verse(s), but sometimes more than one explanation. In constructing that interpretation Bede drew widely on texts in the library of Wearmouth-Jarrow including Old Latin and variant recensions of the Vulgate text, relevant passages from other parts of Scripture, the exegesis of the Fathers, works on science, history or geography by classical writers as well as his own understanding⁸¹. He used the full range of techniques that he had learnt from his predecessors and could deploy several different modes of explanation in the analysis of a single verse of Scripture. Let me take two consecutive verses from a gospel commentary that reflect Bede's enduring interest in apostles and disciples, to use as a case study; from there I shall move more widely across some of Bede's other writings with a view to showing some of the issues that preoccupied him across his career.

The verses come from Luke's gospel, the evangelist's account of the calling of the disciples (5,1-11). The chapter begins: "And it came to pass that when the multitudes pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret". Bede opened his explanation of this verse with a lengthy discussion of the name of this piece of water, also called the Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Tiberias. He explained its various names by which

80. *In Marcum*, prologue (CCSL 120, p. 432); transl. GORMAN, *Source Marks* (n. 70), p. 259, cf. M.L.W. LAISTNER, *Source-marks in Bede Manuscripts*, in *JTS* 34 (1933) 350-354, p. 350.

81. C.B. KENDALL, *The Responsibility of auctoritas: Method and Meaning in Bede's Commentary on Genesis*, in DE GREGORIO (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition* (n. 3), 101-119; CHAZELLE, *The Codex* (n. 10), pp. 75-78.

the stretch of water was known, saying that it is called Galilee because it lies adjacent to the province of that name, and that the name Tiberias comes from the nearby city once called Chennesareth but restored by the Herodian tetrarchy in honour of Tiberias Caesar. As for the name Gennesaret, he believed that to come from the nature of the lake itself (which is thought from its crossing waves to raise a breeze upon itself) being the Greek expression for “making a breeze to itself”. For the water is not steady like that of a lake, but constantly agitated by the breezes blowing over it⁸². The lake itself he saw as representing the present age, while the crowd that gathered to hear the word of Jesus he saw as a type of those of whom Isaiah wrote, “and all nations shall flow unto it, and many people shall go and say, Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord”⁸³. In this short paragraph he used his knowledge of the geography and history of the Holy Land, and his understanding of the etymology of words and place-names, to situate the events that would unfold; he also reflected on the symbolic significance of the water and of the crowd. In relation to the next verse – “and he saw two ships standing by the lake but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets” – Bede interpreted the two ships as figuring the circumcision and the foreskin, and the fishermen as the *doctores*, teachers, of the church, who catch us by the net of faith and raise us from the depth to light, just as they draw fish to the shore⁸⁴. That reference to *doctores* echoes in others of Bede’s writings.

Doctores played a key role across all Bede’s exegesis, something that has already occasioned a good deal of scholarly interest⁸⁵. As he explained in his commentary *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, *doctores* constituted a special group, whom he portrayed almost as an elite class of people in the church; they were persons who are “superior in merit and education” who “either show to those who preach the word the example of their own virtues or produce plentiful pages of holy writings so that, strengthened by their exhortations and promises, they might grow less weary in their heavenly labour”⁸⁶. That

82. *In Lucam* 2.5.1 (CCSL 120, 113).

83. *Ibid.*, quoting Isa 2,2-3.

84. Cf. *In Lucam* 1.1.2 (CCSL 120, 54) (commenting on “all that heard wondered at the things told them by the shepherds”): *non sapientes sed simplices qui fugare audita nescirent dominus sui praecones eligit non rethores sed piscatores ad euangelizandum destinauit*.

85. See for example I. THACKER, *Bede’s Ideal of Reform*, in P. WORMALD – D.A. BULLOUGH – R. COLLINS (eds.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983, 130-153; S. DEGRIGORIO, *Monasticism and Reform in Book IV of Bede’s ‘Ecclesiastical History of the English People’*, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61 (2010) 673-687, at pp. 684-685.

86. *In Ezram et Neemiam* 1.3.7 (CCSL 119A, p. 275); transl. DEGRIGORIO, p. 58.

they could come from a low social status, such as that of fishermen, might seem paradoxical, but Bede pursued the same idea in other places in his writings. It was not their standing in society that made *doctores* pre-eminent, but their knowledge of the truth of salvation and their capacity to convey it to others. As Bede said earlier in his commentary *On Luke* (in relation to the verse in the nativity narrative “all that heard wondered at the things told them by the shepherds”), God did not choose rhetoricians but fishermen and sent them out to evangelise; elsewhere he also meditated on the significance of shepherds as agents of God’s mission under the old covenant⁸⁷. Famously Bede recounted in his *History* a story of a man of humble origins, a cowherd (an untutored peasant)⁸⁸, who worked on the estates of the monastery of Whitby before he received a miraculous gift of song. The monastery’s abbess, Hild, hearing of his new-found talent, instructed him to renounce his lay habit and take monastic vows. He therefore joined the community of brothers and was instructed in the whole course of sacred history: “He learned all he could by listening to them and then, memorizing it and ruminating over it, like some clean animal chewing the cud, he turned it into the most melodious verse”. His transformation was, as Scott DeGregorio has argued, not only from layman to monk, secular to religious, but from unlettered peasant to erudite monastic *doctor*; as Bede noted, “his teachers became in turn his hearers” (*auditores*). Cædmon’s rumination on the word of Scripture led him to produce verses through which “he sought to turn his hearers away from delight in sin and arise in them the love and practice of good works”, just like the other preachers and teachers whom Bede commended⁸⁹.

That metaphor of meditating on Scripture like clean animals chewing the cud came, of course, from the Levitical notion of clean animals: “Whatsoever hath the hoof divided, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, you shall eat”⁹⁰. In his exposition of Psalm 46, St Augustine explained that,

87. *In Lucam* 1.2.18 (CCSL 120, 54).

88. P.H. BLAIR, *Whitby as a Centre of Learning in the Seventh Century*, in M. LAPIDGE – H. GNEUSS (eds.), *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, 3-32, p. 3.

89. *HE* 4.24, ed. COLGRAVE – MYNORS, pp. 418-419; DEGREGORIO, *Monasticism and Reform* (n. 85), pp. 683-685.

90. Lev 11,3; cf. Deut 14,6. Cf. *De tabernaculo* 3.30.2-3 (CCSL 119A, 127); transl. HOLDER, p. 148. There is a full discussion of all the occasions on which Bede made use of this image in A. CRÉPIN, *Bede and the Vernacular*, in BONNER (ed.), *Famulus Christi* (n. 5), 170-192, pp. 187-189 n. 5. See also G. BONNER, *Bede: Scholar and Spiritual Teacher*, in J. HAWKES – S. MILLS (eds.), *Northumbria’s Golden Age: Proceedings of a Conference Held at Newcastle upon Tyne, July 1996*, Stroud, Sutton Publishers, 1999, 365-370, pp. 368-369;

“when God laid down regulations about animals that chew the cud being classed as clean, he meant to teach us by this reference to rumination that each of us should consign what we hear to our hearts and not be slow to mull it over afterwards”⁹¹. For Bede, this proved a favourite image, occurring in a number of other places in his exegesis, as for example in a passage in *On Acts* in which he explained the significance of the name of the disciple Tabitha in Greek: Dorcas, which means “gazelle”. Gazelles have a two-fold significance. Because of the sharpness of their vision they may be compared with the saints, “as they dwell on high by the merits of their works, through mental contemplation they simultaneously direct their attention with wisdom toward things above, while always watching out for themselves with prudent discretion”. But also, because deer “are clean according to the law”, they are “like those who are content to live simply and with discretion in the course of action, as it were walking with split hooves and ruminating (*ruminare*) in continual meditation on the word of God”⁹².

The same image appeared in two of Bede’s homilies, for example in the one I quoted earlier in which Bede said he had completed his exegesis of the pericope “following in the footsteps of the fathers”. He went on to advise his hearers to keep the memory of the word in their minds, “to explore its sweetness with faithful hearts and to ruminate upon it frequently with a chaste mouth. What benefit is there in coming together to hear God’s word and once it is over, to return right away to empty and worldly conversations and actions?”⁹³. Bede proffered similar hortatory advice in *On Luke*, where he commended imitation of the example of the Virgin Mary who “kept all these words in her heart”, so also should the faithful ruminate and closely examine the words of the evangelist⁹⁴. On other occasions Bede made a connection between rumination on Scripture and the preaching of doctors. In his allegorical commentary *On the Song of Songs*, Bede reflected on the best wine, which he interpreted as the word of the gospel, “in which alone there is eternal salvation for those who believe”. So when the bride says to

P.J. WEST, *Rumination in Bede’s Account of Cædmon*, in *Monastic Studies* 12 (1976) 217-236.

91. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 46.1, ed. E. DEKKERS – J. FRAIPONT (CCSL, 38), Turnhout, Brepols, 1956, p. 529.

92. *Expositio Actuum* 1.36 (CCSL 121, 44).

93. Bede, *Homelia* 2.11 (CCSL 122, 258): ...*mecum pariter ammonere ut eius memoriam sollicita semper intentione seruemus eius suavitatem et deuoto pectore scrutemur et casto saepius ore ruminemus. Quid enim prodest ad audiendum uerbum Dei conuenire et expleto auditu ad inania mox et saecularia conloquia uel acta conuerti?*; transl. MARTIN – HURST, II, p. 105.

94. *In Lucam* 1.2.51 (CCSL 120, 73); compare also *In Lucam* 1.2.19 (CCSL 120, 55).

the bridegroom, “it is worthy for my beloved to drink and for his lips and his teeth to chew”, she is, Bede argued, “speaking figuratively, calling the holy teachers the beloved’s lips and teeth, as when they chew the good wine when in frequent meditation they rejoice to study the word of grace and share it with one another”⁹⁵. Similarly, the oxen in Proverbs (14,4: “when there are no oxen the crib is empty; but the strength of a great ox ensures rich crops”) Bede took to signify the catholic doctors (*doctores catholicos*), who chew God’s word in a clean mouth and walk the path of truth. The crib he understood as the assembly of their listeners; it is filled thanks to the labour of the oxen and that in turn feeds the oxen⁹⁶.

We have come a long way from the description of the sea of Gennesaret, but I have deliberately walked sideways with Bede in order to show how effectively he proved able to explore a single idea across a whole range of different texts, encompassing all the different methods of scriptural interpretation at his disposal (etymology of place and personal names, numerology, images from nature, examples from history and concordance between the Scriptures). Let me try to summarise some conclusions.

CONCLUSION

This paper began by considering Bede’s perception of his own exegetical endeavour as like that of the act of peeling back the bark from a piece of wood from a tree in order to get to the true meaning hidden inside. That desire to uncover what is hidden at first glance, to complicate what may seem straightforward, and use word-play and rhetoric to lay bare complex layers of meaning underneath the surface of the text animated Bede throughout his adult career. The impetus that drove him to do this, I believe came from his self-identification as a teacher above all else. He placed teaching at the heart of his own vocation, seeing it as his duty not only to teach other members of his own monastic community (as he continued to do right up to the day of his death)⁹⁷, but also through his writing, to unveil the hidden meaning of Scripture in order to reveal the great mysteries of Christ and his

95. *In Cantica canticorum* 5.7.9 (CCSL 119B, 331); transl. A.G. HOLDER, *On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings* (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York, Paulist Press, 2011, p. 215.

96. *In proverbial Salomonis* 2.14.4 (CCSL 119B, 83); CRÉPIN, *Bede and the Vernacular* (n. 90), p. 188.

97. Cuthbert, *Epistola de obitu Bedae*, ed. and transl. COLGRAVE – MYNORS, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History* (n. 12), pp. 582-585.

Church⁹⁸. Passages that he included in his commentaries from the writings of earlier Church fathers, and those which he composed himself, all served the same purpose: to instruct pastors and teachers in “the faith that (in the words of the epistle of Jude) ‘was once handed down to the saints’”⁹⁹. He wanted his readers to learn “no other faith than that which was once handed down to you by the apostles and to struggle always on its behalf to death”¹⁰⁰. Bede’s primary purpose in all his writings, including his exegesis, was pedagogic. He was impelled by the need to explain that which he had learnt from a lifetime of immersion in the texts of Scripture and the writings of the Fathers in a clear and simple style that his own contemporaries might not only understand, but from which they could learn lessons to carry into their own lives. Whether those were given to devotion and contemplation, or to the active work of labouring in the lord’s vineyard for the salvation of souls, the canon of Scripture offered the best prescription for the proper achievement of an individual’s vocation.

My attempt to explore his working methods first by considering the manual he wrote on hermeneutics and then by looking at some examples of that method in practice has not convinced me that to separate his New Testament from his Old Testament exegesis is necessarily the most productive way in which to explore Bede’s theology, or to assess his contribution to patristic exegesis, even though this is what most of those who have written surveys of Bede’s thought have done previously. I rather suspect that it will ultimately prove more productive to analyse his thought thematically, as for example Conor O’Brien has done in addressing Bede’s ideas about the Temple across the whole range of his written output¹⁰¹. Only if one takes one idea – evangelists and apostles; salvation; the nature of Christ; grace; eschatology etc., – and explores that single theme across his whole output (encompassing his homiletic, historical and hagiographical writings, and scientific writings as well as his exegetical works) will it be possible to demonstrate whether, and if so how, Bede’s thought evolved over the course of his long career and where he made the most original contributions.

Bede himself deserves the last word, and I take it from that commentary *On the First Epistle of John* which he sent to his bishop Acca in the difficult period when he struggled to find the time to interpret Luke. Commenting

98. *In Tobiam* 1.1 (CCSL 119B, 3).

99. HOLDER, *Bede and the New Testament* (n. 32), p. 147.

100. *In epistolas VII catholicas*, Jude 3 (CCSL 121, 335).

101. O’BRIEN, *Bede’s Temple* (n. 15). For other demonstrations of the merits of exploring Bede’s thought thematically rather than via the type of text he wrote see CARROLL, *The Venerable Bede* (n. 41), and CHAZELLE, *The Codex* (n. 10), pp. 63-134.

on the verse, “And we have written these things to you that our joy may be full” (1 John 1,4), Bede, the born teacher, wrote¹⁰²:

The joy of teachers becomes full when by preaching they lead many to the fellowship of the holy Church and to the fellowship of him through whom the Church is strengthened and increases, God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Hence Paul also says to those whom he was instructing in the faith (Phil 2,2), “Make my joy full, that you may savour the same thing, having the same charity, being of one mind, savouring together”.

Bede found joy through his career in reflecting on the words of Scripture and conveying his deep understanding of their meaning for the benefit of his brothers (and sisters) in the cloister, in the hope that they might share his abiding love in his redeeming saviour¹⁰³. For all his knowledge and proficiency in explanation, he remained very modest about his achievements. As he wrote at the end of the preface to his commentary *On Acts*, addressing his bishop, Acca: “If you should find anything useful in either of these works, attribute it to God’s gifts; if you find anything useless, have compassion on my frailty”¹⁰⁴. I might make the same plea to my own readers.

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102. *In epistolas VII catholicas*, 1 John 1,4 (CCSL 121, 286): *Gaudium doctorum fit plenum cum multis praedicando ad sanctae ecclesiae societatem atque ad eius per quem ecclesiae roboratur et crescit Dei patris et filii eius Iesu Christi societatem perducunt. Vnde etiam Paulus his quos ad fidem instituebat ait: Implete gaudium meum ut idem sapiatis eandem caritatem habentes unianimes id ipsum sapientes.*

103. Bede dedicated one of his commentaries to a nun: *In Habacuc* (CCSL 119B); see B. WARD, “*To My Dearest Sister*”: *Bede and the Educated Woman*, in L. SMITH – J.H.M. TAYLOR (eds.), *Women, the Book and the Godly*, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1995, 105-111; and S. FOOT, *Women, Prayer and Preaching in the Early English Church*, in S. BHATTACHARJI – R. WILLIAMS – D. MATTOS (eds.), *Prayer and Thought in Monastic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Sr Benedicta Ward*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, 59-76, pp. 59-63.

104. *Expositio Actuum*, preface (CCSL 121, 5).

ABBREVIATIONS

BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanienium
BZNW	Beiträge zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
J ECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTOA/SUNT	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus / Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
NTS	New Testament Studies
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
RBen	Revue Bénédictine
REAug	Revue d'Études Augustiniennes (et Patristiques)
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SuppJSNT	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of the New Testament
SupplNT	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
SupplVigChr	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
VigChr	Vigiliae Christianae
VL	Vetus Latina
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

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