

CHAPTER 7

THE CHRISTUS PATIENS AND GEORGE OF NICOMEDIA

Since the last years of the 19th century, there were numerous attempts to prove the inauthenticity of the *Christus patiens* by indicating parallels between it and diverse Byzantine authors. Inversely, V. Cottas (1931) defended the authenticity of the play, *inter alia* by asserting its anteriority to two homilies by George of Nicomedia: the *Λόγος εἰς τὸ Εἰσπήκεισαν δὲ παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ ...* (Migne, PG 100, 1457 ff.), and the *Λόγος εἰς τὴν τῆς ἀχράντου Θεοτόκου ἐν τῷ τάφῳ παρεδρεῖαν ...* (Migne, PG 100, 1489 ff.).

In scholarly circles, Cottas was severely castigated for some of her assertions - especially those regarding the alleged influence of the play upon Byzantine iconography - while others have simply been ignored. However, the remarks of Cottas concerning the relations between the *Christus patiens* and the homilies by George of Nicomedia have not been totally ignored. In a review of her publications, L. Bréhier (1932) - clearly opposed to the idea that the play may belong to Gregory of Nazianzus - asserts the following:

- 1) The most that could possibly be inferred from parallels with the *Christus patiens* occurring in the homilies of George of Nicomedia, is that the play is anterior to A.D. 860, the approximate date of composition of these homilies.
- 2) Alternatively, one may suppose that the anonymous author of the play has made use of the homilies. This would support the conclusion that the *Christus patiens* is a product of the late Byzantine era.
- 3) This same conclusion could be reached when assuming yet a third possibility, *viz.* that both the homilies and the play are derived from a common source, probably of Syrian origin.

At face value, these remarks of Bréhier all seem reasonable, though one may perhaps object to assuming the existence of a literary source which had such a distinct influence upon two essentially different works, but left no other traces in the form of quotations, allusions, or biographical references.

R. Cantarella (1948) takes a more neutral position, stating that the entire question of the play's authenticity will have to be reconsidered, if these homilies by George of Nicomedia really contain allusions to the *Christus patiens*. However, as yet no scholar - not even A. Tuilier (1969), who devotes a large section of his *Introduction* to the possible relations between the play and diverse Byzantine authors - has taken the trouble of pursuing the question whether in fact there exist any significant parallels between the *Christus patiens* and George of Nicomedia.

The most obvious elements common to the *Christus patiens* and the homilies of George which Cottas has referred to, are (1) the central position of interest occupied by Mary, the mother of the Lord, and (2) the extensive dialogue occurring between her and Jesus. These elements in themselves provide no proof that one of the works concerned is dependent upon the other. Neither does the argument that the homilist refers to Gregory of Nazianzus by the term ὁ θεολόγος, deserve any scholarly credence.

Note: It is difficult to see how Cottas could have asserted that George of Nicomedia in these homilies names his source as "the theologian", since he uses the term θεολόγος only in the following contexts:

1) Μόνης μέντοι τῆς ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ παραστάσεως τῆς Μητρὸς, ὁ θεσπέσιος οὗτος μέμνηται θεολόγος: τῆς δὲ πρὸ αὐτοῦ τε καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν καρτερίας αὐτῆς, οὐτ' αὐτὸς, οὔθ' ἕτερος τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν μεμνημένος τρανώτερον φαίνεται. - *Indeed this divine theologian mentions only the assistance of the Mother at the cross; and it seems that neither he, nor any other of the evangelists, mentions quite distinctly her perseverance both before and after the crucifixion.* (PG 100, 1461 C). The reference is without doubt to St. John the Evangelist.

2) In the second homily, while arguing that "the other Mary" of Mt 27.61 and 28.1 is not the mother of Jesus, George says: Ἔστι δὲ καὶ βεβαιότερα τῷ πράγματι μαρτυρία, ἢ ἀληθεστάτη τῶν θεολόγων ἱστορία. Ἦνίκα μὲν γὰρ αὐτὴν ὁ ἠγαπημένος μαθητῆς ἐγγύς τε εἶναι, καὶ σχεδὸν τοῦ θείου σταυροῦ προψάσειν ἔφησεν, οἱ λοιποὶ ταύτας ἀσυμφώνως μακρόθεν ἐστάναι, καὶ τὰ δρώμενα κατανοεῖν ἀνιστόρησαν. - *The very true history of the theologians is also a quite trustworthy witness to the matter; for while the beloved disciple said that she was near and almost touched the divine cross, the others reported that these women stood at a distance, and watched the proceedings.* Then he quotes the relevant passage from Matthew (27.55-6), adding that Mark and Luke also confirm this. (PG 100, 1493 D) It is clear again that οἱ θεολόγοι signify the Evangelists.

Thus the homilies contain no explicit reference to Gregory of Nazianzus ("the Theologian") or to the *Christus patiens*.

However, by means of a detailed **comparison** between the *Christus patiens* on the one hand, and the homilies on the other, we may hope to clarify the nature of the relationship between these works.

Instances of **verbal correspondence** may indicate that one of these documents has exerted some influence upon the other. However, it must be remembered, firstly, that in this case such correspondence does not necessarily reveal which of the documents has exerted the influence and which has undergone it; and secondly, regarding these works in particular we must take into account that the homilies are written in prose, the play in iambic trimeters; therefore precise correspondence in terms of vocabulary and word order can hardly be expected to occur – or it should be regarded as especially significant if it does occur.

A conspicuous point of correspondence between these homilies and the *Christus patiens* is the frequent use of δεσπότης – instead of the much more usual κύριος – referring to the Lord. In the homily, Mary repeatedly addresses the Lord as Δέσποτα. The term δεσποτικός also occurs more than once; while among all these instances, George rarely uses the term Κύριος. In the play (lines 1-2602) the term κύριος never occurs, while ten occurrences of δεσπότης may be counted in the first part (lines 1-1133) alone.

The homilist refers to Mary's presence at the crucifixion, in the phrase παρ' αὐτῷ τῷ σταυρῷ τὴν Μητέρα ... παρσητηκέσαι (*that the Mother stood right next to the cross* – 1461 B). In the play, we find the phrase μήτηρ ἐμπαρσητῶσ' ἱκρίῳ (*the Mother standing next to the wooden post* – 1223).

Both authors gave considerable emphasis to this thought, even if for different reasons. The homilist used it as part of his argument that Mary was involved in these events to a much greater extent than indicated by the synoptic Gospels. It seems that he deliberately intensified the phrase παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ (*by the cross*) of Jn 19.25, to παρ' αὐτῷ τῷ σταυρῷ (*right next to the cross*), since this phrase is contrasted in the homily to the (ἀπὸ) μακρόθεν of Mt 27.55, Mk 15.40, and

Lk 23.49. To the dramatist, on the other hand, the important aspect seems to be the *pathos* contained in this scene, with its striking balance between the shocked reaction from the onlookers and the maternal grief of the Virgin, as blood and water flows from the side of Jesus.

Consider the following phrases: τὸ ἀνδρείον καὶ τολμηρὸν ἐπεδείκνυτο (*she showed braveness and courage*) in the homily (1461 C), and ἀνδρῶαν εἰσφέρουσα τὴν τολμηρίαν (*practicing brave boldness*) in the play (1958). It is true that in the play these are the words by which Magdalene is encouraged, while for George the courageous attitude and actions of the Virgin is the important issue to be emphasized. However, the verbal correspondence is striking. Consider, firstly, the noun τολμηρία: in the play it occurs seven times; in five of these instances it indicates the attitude of Judas or of the Jewish council, once that of the guard (ἐμφόβῳ τολμηρία), and only once (here at 1958) is it used in its positive sense. It is qualified by the adjective ἀνδρῶος, of which this is the only occurrence in the play. Thus the phrase ἀνδρῶα τολμηρία is notable for the unusual sense in which the noun is used, for the single occurrence of the adjective, and also for its reference to a woman. It can hardly be due to chance that the same pair of words occur in a similar context in the homily.

The diphysite nature of Christ is expressed in the homilies, in the words τὸν Υἱὸν καὶ Δεσπότην (*her Son and Master* - 1465 A) and in τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Υἱοῦ παθῶν (*of the Passion of her Lord and Son* - 1477 C). In the *Christus patiens*, it is not until after the crucifixion that the Virgin calls Jesus Τέκνον ... καὶ Θεόν μου (*my child and my God* - line 928). The homily does not contain any indications of the development which leads to this insight on the part of the Virgin. Could this more human portrayal of her by the dramatist indicate that the play was composed earlier than the time of George?

Note: The phrase Τέκνον καὶ Θεόν μου finds an almost perfect echo in the refrain of Romanos' *kontakion On Mary at the Cross*: ὁ υἱὸς καὶ Θεός μου. Parallels between the *Christus patiens* and Romanos are discussed in detail in chapter 8.

Next we may examine two short passages, one from the homily, the other from the play:

In the homily (column 146B A) we read: ... <βλέπουσα> πρὸς τὴν ἐκούσιον σφαγὴν τὸν Υἱὸν χωροῦντα ... ; πῶς ὡς ἄρνιον ἄκακον, ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀμνὸς ἤγετο· πῶς ὡς κατάκριτος, ὁ τὴν τοῦ κόσμου ἁμαρτίαν ἀφαιρούμενος εἴλκετο - ... *as she saw her son proceeding voluntarily to his own slaughter? How the Lamb of God was led like an innocent lamb; how the One who removes the sin of the world, was dragged forth like a convict!*

In the *Christus patiens* (444-7) the Virgin addresses her son as follows:

χερσὶ τῶν ἀλαστόρων,
θεηγενές μοι Τέκνον, ἔλκη καὶ φέρεις,
εἰς δεσμά τ' ἤλθες καὶ θέλων ἄγη σφίσιν,
ὁ δεσμολύτης τοῦ γένους τῶν δεσμίων.

*By the hands of persecutors,
my God-born son, you are dragged forth, and you endure it;
you have been bound and willingly you are led by them,
you who release the bonds of those in bondage.*

These two passages contain the following common elements:

- 1) In terms of vocabulary, the homily has the verbs ἤγετο and εἴλκετο, while the play has ἔλκη and ἄγη.
- 2) The same type of contrasting occurs in both passages: ὡς κατάκριτος is contrasted to τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἀφαιρούμενος in the homily, just as εἰς δεσμά is to δεσμολύτης in the play.
- 3) Jesus suffers voluntarily - expressed by ἐκούσιος in the homily, and by θέλων in the play.
- 4) The divine origin of Jesus is mentioned in both passages.

When considered separately, these common elements may seem insignificant. The term θέλων and its parallel expressions, for instance, recur quite frequently in connection with the Passion of Christ - cf. θέλων ἔπαθεν in the *kontakion* of Romanos *On Mary at the Cross* (strophe 4, line 9), and θέλων πάθος δέχεται in strophe 6. When considered jointly, though, and when the brevity of the two passages containing these parallels is taken into account, they seem to support the likelihood of interdependence between the works concerned.

The use of the verb ἀρτάω - *to hang* - both in the *Christus patiens* and in the homilies, may be significant. Consider the following instances in the homilies:

οἱ πονηροὶ δοῦλοι τὸν ἀγαθὸν ἀνήρτησαν δεσπότην (*The wicked slaves hung up the good Master* - 1469 D); and τὸν γὰρ ζωοποιὸν νεκρὸν ἀνηρτημένον ἔτι (*for when the life-bringing dead one was still hanging* - 1481 A).

In the *Christus patiens* we find ἔσχον οὕτως Δεσπότην ἠρτημένον (*they had the Master hung up in this way* - 666); ὁρῶ λησταῖς σε συνηρτημένον (*I see you hanging among robbers* - 706); and αὐτοῖς, οἳ σ' ἀνήρτησαν, Τέκνον (*to those who have hung you up, my Child* - 742).

The occurrence of ἀρτάω - or ἀναρτάω - is quite rare in the context of the crucifixion. Neither ἀρτάω nor its composites ἀναρτάω and συναρτάω occur in the New Testament. Thus it is noteworthy that this word is repeatedly used to signify the crucifixion - both in the *Christus patiens* (line 232, the instances quoted above, and line 1429) and in the homilies.

The crucifixion is described on two occasions in the homilies as τὸ φρικτὸν τοῦτο θέαμα (*this terrifying spectacle* - 1472 A and 1473 A). The phrase φρικτὸν θέαμα occurs in the play, at lines 1000, 1105, and 1220, where it also refers to the crucifixion. The same is true of the phrase δεινὸν θέαμα occurring at line 871. An interesting feature of these phrases as they are used in the play, is that they consistently occur at the beginning of a trimeter line, just as in the plays of Euripides, where we find

δεινὸν θέαμα in line 1202 of the *Medea*,
λυπρὸν θέαμα in the *Trojan Women* (1157), and
πικρὸν θέαμα in the *Orestes* (952).

In terms both of scansion and of meaning, φρικτόν is a good substitute for either λυπρόν or πικρόν. Accordingly, it seems probable that the phrases δεινὸν θέαμα and φρικτὸν θέαμα in the play are taken directly from Euripides, and that George in his turn has taken the expression φρικτὸν θέαμα from the *Christus patiens*. The inverse order - *viz.* that the author of the play has copied these typically Euripidean phrases from the homilist - seems much less probable.

Some more instances of verbal correspondence between the *Christus patiens* and the homilies of George of Nicomedia can be found, but perhaps these would suffice. Next we may look at some **thematic parallels** between the play and the homilies:

According to the homilist, Mary was unaffected by physical pain, but the suffering of Jesus caused her unbearable grief (1464 C). This view is attested in the play too - both in the prologue (lines 1-87) and at lines 428-9:

ἔτικτον αὐτόν, οἶδα δ' ὡς ἐγεινάμην,
στερρὰς φυγοῦσα τῶν τόκων ἀλγηδόνας.
*I bore him, I know how I gave birth,
having escaped the harsh pangs of childbirth.*

Much is made, both in the homilies and in the play, of the uncertainty which the virgin feels regarding the question whether she should hide, or openly follow the procession towards Calvary. (Cf. 1465 C, and lines 88-91 and 480-504.) Of course, in both works the latter impulse gains the upper hand, though we may assume that the different authors had different reasons for taking this option in their portrayal of the virgin mother.

An important theme of the homilies, which has not yet been referred to, is that Mary was the first to witness the resurrection (1496 D). Although in the play she is not alone at this occasion, but accompanied by Mary Magdalene, the significant aspect is that she is the first person who addresses the risen Jesus. (Cf. 2055-2115.)

In their use of **metaphors**, we may also note some interesting parallels between the homilist and the author of the play.

Consider, for instance, the metaphor of the arrow, signifying the intense grief suffered by the virgin mother. In the play the θεοτόκος says: πῶς στροβεῖ μου σπλάγχνα νῦν δριμύ βέλος; (*How the sharp arrow now whirls my heart* - 87). This metaphor has its origin in the prophecy of Simeon: καὶ σοῦ δὲ αὐτῆς τὴν ψυχὴν διελεύσεται ῥομφαία (*And a sword will pierce through your own heart* - Lk 2.35). Note that in the play the

word *ῥομφαία* is not repeated, but the phrase *καρδίαν δίδεισιν ὡς ῥόπτρον μέγα* (*it pierces my heart like a great goad* - 29) is followed by an explicit reference to the prophecy. This comparison - note the conjunction *ὡς* - forms a focal point early in the prologue, and the motif is emphatically restated in the metaphor of line 87. (Cf. the discussion of these aspects in chapter 5.) Thus in the play the term *βέλος* is connected to the prophecy of Simeon, and it is implemented as a metaphor for pangs of grief. In the homily this metaphor repeatedly occurs - sometimes containing the term *ῥομφαία*, and sometimes *βέλος*:

τὰ τότε κατὰ τῶν σπλάγχων αὐτῆς χωρήσαντα βέλη (1464 C)

ἕκαστον . . . ἀναιρετικὸν αὐτῇ προσεπήγνυ τὸ βέλος (1468 A)

τότε κατ' αὐτῆς ἡ σφοδροτέρα προσεπήγνυτο ῥομφαία. τότε τὰ τῆς ὀδύνης κατ' αὐτῆς ἰθύνετο βέλη (1468 C)

[πῶς ὁ ἦλος μὲν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ, ἐν δὲ τῇ καρδίᾳ ταύτης, ἡ καιρία κατεπήγνυτο; (1468 D)]

[ταῦτα γὰρ αὐτῇ βαθυτέραν τῶν προσπαγέντων ἤλων, τὴν ὀδυνηρὰν ἐπαφῆκε πληγὴν (1469 A)]

νῦν δὲ ἀνύποιστά ἐστι τὰ κατ' αὐτῆς ἐμπαγέντα βέλη (1472 B)

τομωτέρα κατὰ τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας, ἡ τοῦ πάθους σου χωρεῖ ῥομφαία. δριμύτεροι τῆς φύσεως οἱ πόνοι (1472 D)

δριμυτάτοις βαλλομένην τῆς φύσεως βέλεσι (1473 D)

ὡς αἱ μυρίαὶ τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Υἱοῦ παθῶν ῥομφαία (1477 C)

[πῶς . . . δριμύτεραι φλόγες κατὰ τῶν αὐτῆς ἐχώρουν σπλάγχων; (1480 B)]

ἄλλη κατ' αὐτῆς τῶν προτέρων ἀποτομωτέρα πέμπεται ῥομφαία (1481 A)

τὴν ταῖς ἀπείροις τοῦ πάθους προτετρωμένην ῥομφαία (1500 D)

Thus, in the metaphoric expressions by which George portrays the grief of the virgin mother, the term βέλος occurs five times, and ῥομφαία five times. In addition to this, the terms καίρια, πληγή, πόνος, and φλόξ each occurs once in phrases ostensibly meant to explain or elaborate the ῥομφαία-βέλος imagery. The prophecy of Simeon (Lk 2.35) is probably the direct source of the term ῥομφαία, but it does not explain the association of this with the term βέλος. The source of this association of the two images may quite probably be the prologue of the *Christus patiens*.

Is there any evidence to be found in the homilies of George of Nicomedia, which will confirm this impression that the *Christus patiens* is earlier than these homilies?

Such evidence may be read in the following passages, which I propose to discuss as possibly commenting on the presentation of thoughts and events in the play:

The homilist presents to his audience the grief of the virgin mother, as if in her own words: ὑπὲρ μητρώας ὠδίνας αἰ διαιρόμεναι φλόγες· τομωτέρα κατὰ τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας ἢ τοῦ πάθους σου χωρεῖ ῥομφαία· δριμύτεροι τῆς φύσεως οἱ πόνοι· ὑπὲρ γὰρ ταύτην καὶ ὁ τόκος· ὅσῳ δὴ παραδοξότερος οὗτος, τοσοῦτῳ τὰ σπλάγχνα σπαρασσομένη τιτρώσκομαι. - *Worse than the pains of childbirth are the flames which rend me apart; sharper does the sword of your Passion pierce through my heart; sharper than nature are my labours; for your birth was also above nature; to the extent that it was paradoxical, to that same extent I am wounded and my heart is torn.* (1472 D)

These remarks seem to be the homilist's interpretation of the following passages from the play:

Καὶ παῖδα πῶς ἔτικτον; ὦ θάμβος μέγα·
ὑβρισμένον δὲ τανῦν πῶς οἴσω βλέπειν;
πόνουςφυγοῦσα, πῶς ὀδυνῶμαι κέαρ;
And how did I bear a child? O great miracle!
But how will I endure to see him being insulted now?
Having escaped labour, how I suffer in my heart! (68-70)

Σοὶ δ' οὐχ ὅμοιον ἄλλος ἀνθρώποις, κόρη,
κἄν οὐ μόμη σὺ σοῦ δ' ἀπεξύγης Τέκνου.
οὐ γὰρ ὅμοιος σὸς τόκος καὶ τοῦ γένους.
*Your pain is unlike the pain of mankind, o Virgin,
even if you're not the only one deprived of your son;
for you gave birth differently from mankind. (1066-8)*

The words which Jesus addresses to his mother, according to Jn 19.26, are not preceded by any indication of her intense longing to communicate with him. This accords with the sober presentation of events by the evangelists. In the *Christus patiens*, however, the θεοτόκος is depicted as saying Δός δός λόγον μοι, ... νῦν γὰρ ... χρήζω ... φωνῆς ἀκούσαι καὶ προσειπεῖν, ὦ Τέκνον - *Speak, speak a word to me; for at this moment I yearn to hear your voice and to talk to you, my son (459-62)*. The following excerpt from the homily may be read as an interpretation of this passage: ποθεινὴν ἀφήσει φωνήν ... τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν αὐτῇ τὸ καταθυμίως ἐπιζητούμενον, τὸ καὶ φθογγῆς τοῦ φιλιτάτου προφερομένης ψιλῆς ἀντιλαβέσθαι - *He spoke the words she longed for; since this was what she yearned for with all her heart: to perceive the words even barely addressed to her by the loved one (1473 D)*.

Another passage from the homily reads as follows: Ἄλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν, οὔθ' ἑτέρας διανοίας, οὔτε λόγου παντὸς ἱκανὸν ἐκτραγωδεῖναι. ... τοῦ δὲ υἱοῦ μόνου, καὶ τῆς ἔργῳ πεπειραμένης μητρὸς, καὶ συνεγνωκέναι ταῦτα, καὶ λόγον ἐξειπεῖν, - *But it seemed fitting that no other mind, neither any other words would give tragic expression to these things; ... it was only for the son, and for his mother who had actually experienced it, to understand these things and to express them in words. (1480 B)*

This passage could hardly refer to the canonical version of the Passion, which contains no indication of words spoken by the virgin mother. However, it is in full agreement with the choice of characters made by the dramatist - a conscious and deliberate choice, though obviously not one which he himself would discuss in the text of his play.

(Perhaps one point should be clarified: I do not regard the verb ἐκτραγωδησαι as a technical term, specifically denoting dramatic performance. Thus I do not regard this passage as an explicit reference to the *tragedy*; but in the light of the evidence cited above, it seems that the parallel expressions ταῦτα ἐκτραγωδησαι and λόγον ἐξειπεῖν are applicable to the *Christus patiens*, in which the θεοτόκος is primarily the one who gives verbal expression to the meaning and effect of these events.)

* * *

Near the end of the second homily (col. 1500 C) there occurs a **contradiction** which - as inadvertent allusion to the play - may be even more significant than all the verbal and thematic parallels thus far discussed. There George asserts that the Lord Jesus revealed the splendour of the resurrection first to Mary - τῇ θεολόγῳ καὶ μυροφόρῳ Παρθένῳ. The description μυροφόρος implies that she was one of the group of women who went to the tomb bringing perfumed oil. This contradicts the argument that she kept constant watch at the tomb, and belies the vehement opposition of George against those who hold that she was "the other Mary" who is mentioned in Mathew 28.1. (Cf. 1493B-1496A.) Of course it is possible that George here contradicts his own arguments simply because of carelessness, but it does seem more probable that the contradiction is due to the influence of a version like that of the *Christus patiens*, where the Virgin is portrayed as one of those who go to the tomb "to embalm the body" - μυρίσαι νέκυν - a phrase occurring at lines 1915, 1956, and 2118.

Note: The editor of the text in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus (series Graeca)* 100, 1457 ff, 1489 ff, comments upon the incongruity of the definition μυροφόρος in this context, but notes that it cannot be due to a scribal error. Indeed, the presence of this *epitheton* in the text is guaranteed by the concluding passage of the homily: Ἐχωμεν μυροφόρον, δι' ἧς ἡμῖν τὴν ἀναφαίρετον καταμηνύσης χαρὰν: ... ἐν αὐτῇ μὲν ἐσκήνωσας, ἡμῖν δὲ δι' αὐτῆς ἐπεδήμησας. There can be little doubt that μυροφόρος in this passage, too, refers to the mother of the Lord.

* * *

This comparison between the *Christus patiens* and the homilies of George of Nicomedia leads to the following conclusions:

1) Firstly, there are many more instances of correspondence between these works than may be explained as due merely to coincidence. Although neither of these works contain any explicit reference to the other, it seems quite certain that one of the authors involved has been influenced by the other.

2) Secondly, a close examination of the nature of the corresponding phrases, themes, and images seems to indicate the direction of this influence: that the homilist borrowed from the *Christus patiens*, seems somewhat more probable than the opposite.

3) If this last inference is correct, it follows logically that the play must have been known to the homilist.

Accordingly, we have in the era of George of Nicomedia a *terminus ante quem* for the *Christus patiens*. This in itself does not provide any positive proof regarding the real date and author of the play, but at least in the light of the bitter controversy about this issue, a *terminus ante quem* in the 9th century disposes of the hypothesis so generally accepted by scholars who regard the *Christus patiens* as an anonymous work of the 11th or the 12th century.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 8

COMPARISON WITH TWO KONTAKIA OF ROMANOS

In the long dispute regarding the true origin of the *Christus patiens*, many literary parallels have been cited in attempts to identify either a *terminus post quem*, or a *terminus ante quem*, by which the possible date of origin of the play may be calculated. Scholarly opinion has discredited some of these alleged parallels as inconclusive, mainly for two reasons:

- 1) The parallels involve themes or phrases which occur, or which may be expected to occur, quite frequently in literary presentations of the events relating to the crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. These themes or phrases may be regarded as literary τόποι, or *loci communi*, and they do not constitute any proof of the interdependence between two specific literary works.
- 2) Even in cases where literary dependence can be definitely established, or be argued with great probability, it often remains impossible to determine the direction in which the influence has operated. In other words, it may still remain impossible to indicate with certainty which of the works or authors concerned is the source, and which the recipient, of the influence producing the literary parallel.

However, some of these parallels warrant a thorough, renewed investigation, and a reconsideration of their significance. Among these are the analogies between certain passages in the *Christus patiens*, and the presentation of the Passion of Christ in two of the *kontakia* by Romanos the Melodist.

This chapter intends to analyse these parallels between the *Christus patiens* and Romanos, and to examine critically the conclusions which different scholars have drawn from them. Its aim is to illustrate that some of these conclusions go beyond the evidence upon which they claim to be based, while others are manifestly wrong. Finally, a newly formulated and duly verified conclusion will be given.

The most conspicuous parallels between the *Christus patiens* and Romanos occur at lines 454-460 of the play, and in the first strophe of Romanos' *kontakion* "On Mary at the Cross".

Note: The original title of the *kontakion* in question is Κοντάκιον ἕτερον τῇ μεγάλῃ παρασκευῇ εἰς τὸ πάθος τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ εἰς τὸν θρῆνον τῆς Θεοτόκου. It is referred to by Pitra as *De Virgine iuxta crucem*. Although this is a misleading title - the contents actually concern the *via dolorosa* - the example of Pitra is followed by Cammelli (*Maria alla Croce*), Grosdidier de Matons (*Marie à la Croix*), and Maas-Trypanis (*On Mary at the Cross*). In this study, references to the *kontakia* will include both the Maas-Trypanis (Oxford) and the *Sources Chretiennes* numbering, e.g. Oxford 19/SC 35.

In order to appreciate the full extent of the correspondence between these two passages, the text of both is given here:

Christus patiens, lines 454-465:

Πῆ πῆ πορεύῃ, Τέκνον; ὡς ἀπωλόμην·	
ἔκτητι τίνος τὸν ταχὺν τελεῖς δρόμον;	455
μὴ γάμος αὐθις ἐν Κανᾶ κάκει τρέχεις,	
ἴν' ἐξ ὕδατος οἰνοποιήσης ξένως;	
Ἐφέσομαί σοι, Τέκνον, ἥ μενῶ σ' ἔτι;	
Δὸς δὸς λόγον μοι, τοῦ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς Λόγε,	
μὴ δὴ παρέλθης σίγα δούλην μητέρα·	460
νῦν γὰρ στόματος φιλίου χρήζω σέθεν	
φωνῆς ἀκοῦσαι καὶ προσειπεῖν, ὦ Τέκνον.	
Δός μοι, πρὸς αὐτοῦ Πατρός, ὦ Τέκνον, σέθεν,	
σοῦ θεσπεσίου χρωτὸς ἄψασθαι χεροῖν	
ψαῦσαι ποδῶν τε καὶ περιπτύξασθαί σε.	465

"On Mary at the Cross" (Oxford 19/SC 35), strophe 1:

Τὸν ἴδιον ἄρνα ἡ ἀμνάς θεωροῦσα
 πρὸς σφαγὴν ἐλκόμενον ἠκολούθει Μαρία τρυχομένη
 μεθ' ἑτέρων γυναικῶν, ταῦτα βοῶσα·
 Ποῦ πορεύῃ, τέκνον; Τίνος χάριν τὸν ταχὺν δρόμον τελεῖς;
 Μὴ ἕτερος γάμος πάλιν ἔστιν ἐν Κανᾶ
 κάκει νυνὶ σπεύδεις ἴν' ἐξ ὕδατος αὐτοῖς οἶνον ποιήσης;
 Συνέλθω σοι, τέκνον, ἥ μείνω σε μᾶλλον;
 Δός μοι λόγον, Λόγε· μὴ σιγῶν παρέλθης με,
 ὁ ἀγνὴν τηρήσας με, ὁ υἱὸς καὶ Θεός μου.

A mere glance at these passages will probably convince most readers that the works to which they belong are undeniably interdependent. The correspondence between them is quite obvious, and is so extensive, that there seems to be but one logical conclusion: One of the authors concerned has in all probability borrowed this passage from the other - unless, of course, the passage in the *Christus patiens* is merely a later interpolation. In that case the borrower may be a scribe or an editor, and accordingly, the parallels would be irrelevant to any question regarding the interdependence of the original form of the works concerned.

It is scarcely probable, though, that the passage in question has been interpolated. It fits the context too well, as the following considerations indicate:

- 1) Both before and after these lines, there occur rhetorical patterns similar to those occurring in the passage itself, e.g. the repetitions (*anadiplosis*) in 433, 448, 453, 466, and 467, and the omission of conjunctions (*asyndeton*).
- 2) The themes of speech and touch occur in close connection, both in the passage (lines 459-465) and directly afterwards (lines 468-469).

Consequently, only two possibilities remain: Either Romanos has borrowed from the *Christus patiens*, or the author of the play has borrowed from Romanos. In terms of this preliminary conclusion, the question to be decided is "who borrowed from whom?" Moreover, since scholarly opinion is still divided between the 4th and the 12th centuries as possible dates of origin for the play, and since the era of Romanos is a fixed point of reference squarely between these two extremes, the question may be formulated as follows: Does Romanos provide a *terminus ante quem* or a *terminus post quem* for the *Christus patiens*?

Supporters of the opinion that the *kontakion* "On Mary at the Cross" (*Oxford 19/SC 35*) constitutes the literary source of *Christus patiens* 454-465, and that, accordingly, the play must be of later origin, argue along the following lines:

These parallels prove only that the unknown author of the play has imitated the Melodist. This simply confirms – they seem to believe – what has been accepted already, *viz.* that the play is inauthentic and of late origin. After all – they say – the play is an imitation from beginning to end, and a dull and uninspiring one too. *Cf.* P. Maas (1932, p. 396):

... in V.454-460 <ist> die im Triodion erhaltene erste Strophe eines Charfreitagsliedes von Romanos schlecht nachgebildet (454 ὡς ἀπωλόμην nichtiges Füllwerk, 458 δός, δός λόγον μοι, τοῦ θεοῦ πατρὸς λόγε ganz flau neben Romanos δός μοι λόγον, λόγε).

With the introduction of the *kanon* into Orthodox liturgy, the *kontakion* was reduced to *prooimion* and first strophe. These circumstances could imply that the first strophe of the *kontakion* in question may have been known to an author who did not have access to the *kontakaria*. Consequently, the fact that the parallels between the play and the *kontakion* are limited to the first strophe of the latter, is regarded by J. Grosdidier de Matons (1967, p. 161 n. 4) as proving the inauthenticity of the *Christus patiens*.

Furthermore, the fact that the material occurring in Romanos presents itself in amplified form in the play, is regarded by A. Momigliano (1932) as a definite indication that Romanos is the source, and the author of *Christus patiens* the imitator.

Exponents of the opposite point of view, *viz.* that the play is anterior to Romanos, cite the following evidence: the dramatic character of this *kontakion*, quite probably derived from a dramatic source; the habit of the first melodists to draw inspiration from the Fathers of the Church, especially from Gregory of Nazianzus and from St. John Chrysostom; and the expressions belonging to dramatic language, specifically to the style of Euripides.

A. Tuilier (1969, pp. 42-4) discusses four instances of expressions occurring within these parallel passages, which reflect the language of the classical theatre. These are:

- 1) πῆ πῆ πορεύη, Τέκνον; (454)
- 2) ἔκρητι τίνος τὸν ταχὺν τελεῖς δρόμον; (455)
- 3) the adverb σίγα (460)
- 4) the exclamation ὡς ἀπωλόμην (454)

It must be admitted, though, that quite reasonable arguments have been proposed in support of both the opposing opinions mentioned above. Accordingly, if these parallels between the *Christus patiens* and the the *kontakion* "On Mary at the Cross" are viewed in isolation, the only safe conclusion seems to be that one of the authors involved has copied the other. It would be hazardous trying to indicate who imitated whom.

There is, however, another *kontakion* of Romanos which is also relevant to this discussion, *viz.* the first hymn "On the Resurrection" (*Oxford* 29/SC 40). This poem contains the phrase ὡς λέγει ὁ θεολόγος (strophe 3) - and the reference of this phrase has caused much scholarly dispute. Cottas (1931) asserted that ὁ θεολόγος here refers to Gregory of Nazianzus, also known as "the Theologian". To this A. Momigliano (1932) and Grosdidier de Matons (1967, p. 385 n. 5) replied that the reference can only be to St. John the Evangelist. A. Tuilier (1969, p. 44) in his turn, defended the conclusion of Cottas, while criticizing her insufficient discussion of the matter. However, Tuilier himself limits his discussion to the passage in which the phrase ὡς λέγει ὁ θεολόγος occurs, while noting only that its content does not reflect the Paschal events as narrated in the Fourth Gospel, and that Romanos would not have employed the restrictive expression ὡς οἴμαι, if he had intended to evoke the canonical text.

In order to be of value, a comparison between the *kontakion* "On the Resurrection" and the play *Christus patiens* must be conducted on a somewhat larger scale, paying attention also to the less explicit references and to the subtle parallels which occur in these two works.

The text of the relevant extracts from the *kontakion* - the first *προοίμιον* and the third strophe - is given here:

Εἶ καὶ ἐν τάφῳ κατήλθες, ἀθάνατε,
ἀλλὰ τοῦ Ἄιδου καθεῖλες τὴν δύναμιν
καὶ ἀνέστης ὡς νικητής, Χριστὲ ὁ Θεός,
γυναιξὶ μυροφόροις τὸ χαῖρε φθεγξάμενος
καὶ τοῖς σοῖς ἀποστόλοις εἰρήνην δωρούμενος,
ὁ τοῖς πεσοῦσι παρέσχων ἀνάστασιν.

*Even though you descended into the grave, Immortal One,
you have still destroyed the power of Hades
and you have arisen as victor, God Christ,
who extended joyous greetings to the women bearing perfumes
and gave peace to your apostles,
who provides resurrection to those who have fallen.*

Ἐπὶ δὲ τούτου τοῦ σκοποῦ αἱ συνεταῖ ρυθμηθεῖσαι
προέπεμψαν, ὡς οἶμαι, τὴν Μαγδαληνὴν Μαρίαν
ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον, ὡς λέγει ὁ Θεολόγος.

Ἦν δὲ σκοτία, ἀλλ' ἐκείνην πόθος κατέλαμπεν·
ὄθεν καὶ κατείδε τὸν μέγαν λίθον 5
ἐκκεκυλισμένον ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας τῆς ταφῆς
καὶ εἶπεν ὑποστρέψασα·

Μαθηταί, μάθετε τοῦτο ὃ εἶδον
καὶ μὴ με κρύψητε, εἰὰν νοήσητε·
ὁ λίθος οὐκέτι καλύπτει τὸν τάφον· 10
μὴ ἄρα ἦραν τὸν Κύριόν μου;

Οἱ φρουροὶ γὰρ οὐ φαίνονται, ἀλλ' ἔφυγον· μὴ ἐρήγεται
ὁ τοῖς πεσοῦσι παρέχων ἀνάστασιν;

*Agreed on this point, the wise women
sent forth - I think - Mary Magdalene
to the tomb, as the Theologian says.*

*It was dark, but fervour illuminated her;
and therefore she observed that the large stone 5
had been rolled aside from the entrance of the tomb,
and having returned, she said:*

*Disciples, discern this which I have seen
and do not hide it from me if you understand:
No more does the stone cover the tomb; 10
have they perhaps removed my Lord?*

*For no guards are to be seen; they have fled: has He risen
who provides resurrection to those who have fallen?*

The main theme of both the *kontakion* and the third part of the play is the victory of Christ over the power of death. Of course, this theme is explicitly formulated in the first προοίμιον of the *kontakion*. It is repeated in the second προοίμιον, in the climactic formula 'Αληθῶς ἀνέστη Χριστός. In the play, this theme is expressed in various ways. It occurs during the course of the deliberation of the θεοτόκος (1920-9), as part of the expression of her hope and longing to see her Son resurrected (2025-30), and in her reaction to the announcement by the first angel (2070-8). The text of these three passages is given here, for convenient reference:

οὐ γὰρ ὑπὸ γῆς ζόφον	1920
φθορὰ κατασκήψει τις εἰς δέμας Λόγου, οὔτ' οὔν καθέξει ψυχὰν ἔδης παμφάγος· ἐκὼν γὰρ ἔτλη πότμον, οὐκ ὄφλημ' ἔχων, ἵνα κατειρχθῆ κατ' ὀφειλὴν εἰς ζόφον. 'Εξ ἀφθίτου γὰρ ἄφθιτον πεφυκότα	1925
πῶς νιν φθερεῖ ταμίας ἔδης νερτέρων; ὄν καὶ λάφυρ' ἐκείθεν ἐλκύσαι δοκῶ ὄσους βροτῶν καθεῖρξεν, οὓς ξυνήρπασε κᾶδδησεν ἐν δεσμοῖσι πανζόφου στέγης.	
Ἦ Τέκνον, εἶθε τάχος ἔλθοις μοι φάους· ἔλθοις νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκοτοῦ πύλας λιπῶν, ἵν' ἔδης χωρὶς ῥέκισται φάους, νῦν δ' εἶδε φῶς μέγιστον ἐν σῆ καθόδῳ. 'Ἐλθ' ἐλθέ, φάνηθι, προλαβῶν ἡοῦς σέλας. Θεὸν Θεόν σ' ὀλύμπιον τὰ πάντ' ἔχει.	2025 2030
ὡς φρουῖδος ἔδης, Χριστὸς ἀνέστη τάφου, τάφου δὲ λίθος εὐσθενῶς ἀπηλάθη· φρουροὶ τ' αἶδος ἑθύρετρ' ἀνεῖσαν φόβῳ λελυμένοι, νεκροὶ δὲ πρὸς φάους χθόνα σκιρτῶσι, σῶκον ἐκκαλούμενοι Θεόν· τῷ γ' αὐτόματα δεσμὰ πάντ' ἀπερράγη.	2070 2075
ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ	
Ἦ καλλιφεγγὲς ἡλίου σέλας τόδε· πέφθακεν, ὡς ἥλπιστο, τέρμα φροντίδων. Πέπτωκεν ἐχθρός, Χριστὸς ἀνέστη τάφου.	

The imagery pervading these passages involves the association – the equation, almost – of the tomb (ὁ τάφος) with the abode of Hades. This is plainly evident in lines 1920–2, line 1926, lines 1927–9, and lines 2026–7. (Cf. the text given above). However, in line 2072 this imagery is given particular impact by the announcement that "the guards have deserted the gates of Hades". This statement seems to be an allusion to the report in Mt 28.4, that "the guards were shaken with fear of him, and became like dead men" – ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ φόβου αὐτοῦ ἐσεΐσθησαν οἱ τηροῦντες καὶ ἐγενήθησαν ὡς νεκροί. This is supported by the fact that the statement is contrasted with lines 2073b–4a (νεκροὶ δὲ πρὸς φάους χθόνα σκιρτῶσι), also an allusion to Matthew's Gospel (27.52 καὶ τὰ μνημεῖα ἀνεώχθησαν καὶ πολλὰ σώματα τῶν κεκοιμημένων ἀγίων ἠγέρθησαν).

Apart from its Scriptural references, though, the passage is based upon the *Bacchae* of Euripides (lines 445–8):

φρουραὶ γ' ἐκεῖναι λελυμένοι πρὸς ὀργάδας
σκιρτῶσι Βρόμιον ἀνακαλούμεναι θεόν·
αὐτόματα δ' αὐταῖς δεσμὰ διελύθη ποδῶν
κλήδεις τ' ἀνῆκαν θύρετρα ἄνευ θνητῆς χερός.

When the passage in the *Christus patiens* is compared to these lines from the *Bacchae*, the following changes may be noted:

- 1) The meaning of λελυμένος is different in the new context, being defined by φόβω (2072) and by the antithesis implied in σκιρτῶσι (2074).
- 2) The phrase Βρόμιον ἀνακαλούμεναι θεόν (*Bacchae* 446) is replaced by σῶκον ἐκκαλούμενοι θεόν (line 2074), changing the meaning of the verb from "calling upon" to "proclaiming as".
- 3) The most significant alteration is the replacement of the phrase κλήδεις τ' ἀνῆκαν θύρετρα (*Bacchae* 448) by φρουροὶ τ' ἄϊδος θύρετρα ἀνεῖσαν (line 2072). Instead of bolts giving way and letting the doors fly open, the image becomes that of guards deserting their posts, overcome with terror.

This last change, especially, seems to reveal a conscious and deliberate effort to continue the τάφος-ᾄδης imagery, as is suggested by the explicit definition φρουροὶ τ' ἄϊδος, and by the antithesis between φρουροὶ (2072) and νεκροὶ (2073). Thus

the guards at the tomb are symbolically identified with the gate-keepers of the nether world. They are scared to death, while their prisoners, the dead, leap up into freedom.

Note: The choice of the term φρουρός instead of an equivalent like φύλαξ or κουστωδία may be due to an attempt at achieving a better sound effect: φρουροί τ' ἄιδος (2072) sounds closest to φρουῶδος ἄιδης two lines earlier.

Does the *kontakion* contain any parallel to this element in the *Christus patiens*? If it does, what can we learn from it?

According to Romanos (strophe 3 line 12) Mary Magdalene found that the guards had fled from the tomb. This is significantly different from the Gospel narrative. Among the Evangelists, only Matthew mentions the effect which the events associated with the resurrection had upon the guards: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ φόβου αὐτοῦ ἐσεΐσθησαν οἱ τηροῦντες καὶ ἐγενήθησαν ὡς νεκροί (Mt 28.4). The other three do not even mention the guards in this context. Note that Matthew does not imply that the guards fled, but rather that they were unable to do so. Nor does he mention that the women who had arrived there (and whom he identifies as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary) took notice of the absence of the guards. Thus it appears as if Romanos is at variance with his main literary source, the canonical Gospels, when he makes Mary Magdalene say: οἱ φρουροὶ γὰρ οὐ φαίνονται. ἀλλ' ἔφυγον.

However, when one compares this statement in Romanos with the presentation of the paschal events in the *Christus patiens*, the agreement is at once apparent. In the play Mary Magdalene is sent to the tomb in advance (1930-5 and 1941-2; confirmed by the θεοτόκος in 2421, and by Magdalene in 2438). Although she is accompanied by the θεοτόκος (1989), she takes the lead as they approach the tomb (2004-6). Both women are constantly aware of the guards (1907-20 and 1980-1), and Mary Magdalene immediately notices their absence at the tomb (2032). Having noticed also that the stone has been removed, and the tomb is empty, she reports this to the disciples even before she sees the angel (2045-8). Note the expression φίλοις μύσταις ἐρῶ ἄρσιν νέκυος. This recalls her words, which - according to

Jn 20.2 - were addressed to Peter and John only. The synoptic Gospels have no record of such a report, but mention only the report commissioned by the angel. (Cf. Mt 28.7 and Mk 16.7.) Thus it appears that the *Christus patiens* aims at harmonizing the different Gospel narratives, by mentioning that Magdalene (Jn 20.1-2) upon noticing that the guards have deserted their posts (Mt 28.4) and that the stone has been removed (Lk 24.2) reports that someone has taken the body of Jesus (Jn 20.2). Exactly these same elements occur in the third strophe of the *kontakion*. This is evidence of the interdependence existing between the *Christus patiens* and this *kontakion* of Romanos.

Note: For the discussion of a different opinion, the reader is referred to Appendix 1 (pp. 154-156).

An examination of the vocabulary occurring in the *kontakion* - especially the terms ἐκκεκυλισμένον, τάφος and φρουροί - will confirm this conclusion:

1) Romanos says that Magdalene saw the stone ἐκκεκυλισμένον ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας τῆς ταφῆς. The terms occurring in the Gospels, are (ὅτι) ἀποκεκύλισται (Mk 16.4), ἀποκεκυλισμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου (Lk 24.2), and ἠρμένον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου (Jn 20.1). The *Christus patiens* has ἐκκυλισθεῖς (2045). Accordingly, the term used by Romanos - ἐκκυλίνδω - finds a closer parallel in the *Christus patiens* than in any of the Gospels.

Note: The question arises whether this correspondence could be attributed to derivation from a common source other than the Gospels, or perhaps to the general usage of the time. The following facts seem to contradict both these possibilities: Forms of the verb ἐκκυλίνδω or ἐκκυλίω occur 16 times in John Chrysostom - though never in the context of the resurrection; once only in Basil of Caesarea - also in a different context; never in Gregory of Nazianzus, except in the *Christus patiens* (at 2045 and 2253); 4 times in Sozomenus - of which only one occurrence, ἐκκυλίσας τε τοῦ ἐνθάδε φρέατος τὸν λίθον, nearly matches the context in question. On the other hand, forms of the verb ἀποκυλίνδω (or ἀποκυλίω) occur mostly in the context of the resurrection (either of Lazarus or of Jesus) - e.g. in John Chrysostom (12 times), in Eusebius of Caesarea (14), in Amphilochius of Iconium (9), and in Gregory of Nyssa (7).

It may be noted, also, that ἀποκυλίνδω is never used in Attic tragedy; but ἐκκυλίνδω occurs - in Aeschylus (*Prometheus* 87), and in Sophocles (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 812).

2) In the *kontakion* "On the Resurrection", the term τάφος is used most frequently when referring to the tomb of Christ. It occurs 18 times, and ταφῆ 3 times, whereas the terms μνημεῖον and μνῆμα occur only 4 and 11 times, respectively. Compare to these statistics the situation in the Gospels, where μνημεῖον is used most frequently (e.g. Mt 27.52, 53, 60 (twice), 28.8, Mk 15.46 (twice), 16.2, 3, 5, 8, Lk 23.55, 24.2, 9, 12, 22, 24, Jn 19.41, 42, and several times in chapter 20), while the term τάφος occurs only in Matthew (27.61, 64, 66, 28.1). This reveals that the term which Romanos prefers, differs from the one usually occurring in the Gospels, while agreeing with the general usage in the *Christus patiens*. (In the third part of the play, commencing at line 1906, τάφος occurs 42 times, but μνημεῖον twice only.)

3) When Magdalene reports the absence of the guards from the tomb, according to Romanos (3.12), she uses the term φρουροί. Later - in 19.11 - it is said of the guards (οἱ φυλάσσοντες) that they kept watch over the Lord, but had no power over Him (φρουροῦσιν, ἀλλ' οὐ κρατοῦσιν). These terms do not reflect the language of the Gospels, for guards are mentioned only by Matthew, who uses either the term κουστωδία (Mt 27.65, 66) or a participle of τηρέω (Mt 28.4). In the *Christus patiens*, the term φρουροί (2072) is used to signify the guards - notably, in a context parallel to that of strophe 19 of the *kontakion*, and which is also a literary innovation based upon Mt 28.2-7.

In terminology - as in other respects - significant parallels thus exist between the *Christus patiens* and this *kontakion* of Romanos. But again, who borrowed from whom?

Since both authors use the term φρουροί - which they have not taken over from the New Testament, nor, it seems, from any other Patristic source - in parallel contexts, it seems quite likely that one of them has borrowed it from the other.

Note: The noun φρουρός does not occur in the New Testament, while the verb φρουρέω is rare, occurring only three times in the Pauline epistles, and once in I Peter (1.5). Chrysostom uses the verb φρουρέω 45 times, though only 4 of these times he uses it in connection with guards or the powers of Hades.

If we assume that the author of the *Christus patiens* borrowed the term φρουροί from Romanos, a further question, concerning the origin of this term in Romanos, still remains unanswered. If, however, the opposite sequence is assumed – that Romanos borrowed the term from the *Christus patiens* – then it is not any problem to account for the occurrence of this term in the play. The verb φρουρέω – and the correlate noun φρουρός – is quite common in Euripides; and at this stage, the Euripidean influence on the *Christus patiens* is beyond dispute. That the author was aware of the presence and the specific meaning of φρουρός in Euripides, is illustrated by *Christus patiens* 1737 – a line taken *verbatim* from the *Rhesus* (506).

In terms of the interrelations between the *Christus patiens* and the *kontakion*, these observations support the conclusion that Romanos is dependent upon the play, and not *vice versa*.

When the phrase ὡς λέγει ὁ Θεολόγος is regarded in the light of all the evidence discussed, there can hardly be any doubt about its reference. Romanos explicitly indicates the version of these events which he attributes to Gregory of Nazianzus; and the verdict to which diverse bits of evidence unanimously point, is that this version is the one found in the *Christus patiens*.

Is Tuilier's conclusion (*viz.* that the *kontakion* confirms the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*) thus verified? Only in part. All the evidence cited by Tuilier (1969, pp. 39-47) is confirmed by the arguments expounded in this chapter; but it proves only the following two points:

- 1) Romanos was aware of the *Christus patiens*.
- 2) He regarded it as the work of Gregory of Nazianzus.

The only safe conclusion which can be drawn from these facts, is that both the existence of the *Christus patiens*, and its attribution to Gregory of Nazianzus, antedate the early sixth century – the era of Romanos the Melodist.

* * * * *

EXCURSION ON THE SOURCES OF ROMANOS

The harmonizing of the canonical Gospels occurring in the *First Hymn on the Resurrection* by Romanos (*Oxford* 29/SC 40) is discussed also by W. L. Petersen (1985), who asserts that the Diatessaron of Tatian, and Ephrem Syrus, are the sources for many of the readings in Romanos which run parallel to the canonical gospel text, but do not reproduce that source in a *verbatim* manner. Petersen identifies Ephrem's *Commentary* (XXI.22) as the source for Romanos' assertion that Mary Magdalene was sent ahead to the tomb by the other women. After quoting the relevant passages, he remarks (pp. 189-90):

In contrast to the utterances of Ephrem and Romanos, the "Theologian" John (Jn.XX.1) says that Mary ἔρχεται to the tomb; she does not "precede" the rest of the women or anyone else. This same reading, "precede", is also found in one Diatessaronic witness, *Vanden Levene ons Heren*; therefore, it would be attractive to view it as a Diatessaronic reading. Although it is found in the *Commentary* of Ephrem, and now in Romanos, it is lacking from all the other Diatessaronic witnesses; therefore, we hesitate to call it Diatessaronic. What is clear, however, is that Romanos' most likely source for this view of the chronology of the women's trip(s) to the tomb was Ephrem.

In his concluding chapter on the parallels between Romanos and the Syriac works of Ephrem, Petersen (1985, p. 195) says that the list of twenty-one parallels which he has presented and discussed, "could be extended, but then one would begin to encounter parallels which Romanos might have acquired from other sources". This implies that he regards all parallels included in this list as decisively due to influence exerted on Romanos by Ephrem, while excluding the possibility of derivation from any other source.

Regarding the readings in the *First Hymn on the Resurrection*, however, it should be noted that the "parallel" between Romanos and the Syriac *Commentary* of Ephrem is not as close as the parallel between Romanos and the *Christus patiens*. The notion of Magdalene "preceding" the other women, does not necessarily imply that she has been "sent ahead", as Romanos and the author of the *Christus patiens* both explicitly state.

The matter is complicated - though Petersen does not seem to realize it - by Romanos' statement *ὡς λέγει ὁ θεολόγος*. The "Theologian" is understood by Petersen to be the evangelist, John, who merely says that Magdalene "goes" (*ἔρχεται*) to the tomb. When Romanos, however, asserts that she is "sent ahead" to the tomb, "as the Theologian says", the following question arises: Why would the Melodist include a reference to the author of the fourth Gospel, in the very passage where he abandons this source in favour of a divergent tradition? Is it not more reasonable to expect that the phrase *ὡς λέγει* would introduce a reference to the source with which he agrees? If this source were Ephrem, the reference would be enigmatic, since the Syrian was not generally known as "the Theologian" *per se*; and if Romanos intended not to provide an unambiguous reference to his source, what need was there then to include any reference at all? The Melodist was simply too careful and sensitive a poet, to fill out the strophes of his *kontakia* with empty phrases.

A second possibility seems to be that Romanos is referring to the Diatessaron - Petersen says it would be attractive to view "precede" as a Diatessaronic reading - and identifies the author as John, whose Gospel provided the chronological framework of this well known harmony of the four Gospels. But this hypothesis must also be rejected, for two reasons:

- 1) It is not likely that the Diatessaron was still in use, especially at Constantinople, in the 6th century. Theodoret of Cyrus witnesses to the existence of numerous (about 200) copies of the Gospel harmony in his diocese *circa* 430, but these - and no doubt many more - were deliberately destroyed, because Tatian was in his later years considered heretic.

2) If Romanos did regard the Diatessaron as close enough to the canonical version to be an acceptable alternative source, he would probably feel no need to defend his use of it in this particular instance. The fact that he adds the reference *ὡς λέγει ὁ θεολόγος* testifies to his awareness of digressing, at this point, from the tradition which he normally follows.

However, if we assume the "Theologian" on whose authority Romanos here deviates from the Johannine tradition, to be the Nazianzen, we will find the reference *ὡς λέγει ὁ θεολόγος* both functional and unambiguous, and at the same time locate in the *Christus patiens* a direct parallel to the notion of Mary Magdalene being "sent ahead" to the tomb.

It seems obvious that Petersen does not even consider this possibility, since (1) his primary concern is to illustrate the Syriac influence on the *kontakia* of Romanos, and (2) he evidently follows in the footsteps of scholars who regard the *Christus patiens* as a product of the 11th or 12th century.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

For more than four centuries now, scholarly discussion of the *Christus patiens* has been dominated by a dispute concerning the identity of its author. In chapter 2, a picture has been sketched of the diversity of arguments proposed, during the course of this dispute, by the defenders and opponents of the notion that the author was Gregory of Nazianzus. No specific alternative suggestion has enjoyed general acceptance; yet the opinion seems to persist among modern scholars, that the play is a product of the later Byzantine era – probably the 11th or the 12th century. Even after the detailed defence of the authenticity of the play by André Tuilier, the opponents of Gregorian authorship keep reiterating the same arguments which have for many decades been feeding the dispute.

Regarding an issue like this, every individual is of course entitled to his own opinion. The most alarming aspect of the situation, though, is the total lack of consensus concerning the validity and the relative importance of different types of argument pertaining to this question of (in)authenticity.

In accordance with one of the basic suppositions of this study, *viz.* that the evidence of external criticism takes precedence over the arguments of internal criticism – *cf.* chapter 3, p. 81 – a definite conclusion regarding the issue of the play's authenticity was reserved until after detailed examination of evidence relating to the date and author of the *Christus patiens*. This evidence is gained from parallels between the play and two different Byzantine authors: George of Nicomedia, and Romanos the Melodist. (These authors have previously been connected to the *Christus patiens* and to the question regarding its authenticity by other scholars; but the examination of the evidence presented in chapters 7 and 8 is the original contribution of the present author.)

Due to the specific nature and intent of this examination of parallels, though, it does not provide an illustration of the

general literary features of the play, such as its dramatic structure, implementation of poetic and rhetorical figures, its characteristic phraseology, and its relation to literary sources (both thematic and poetic). Therefore, the chapters dealing with these parallels have been preceded by others, in which different aspects of the literary character of the play are illustrated and discussed.

These chapters have revealed the *Christus patiens* to be the product of an author

- who adheres (though not slavishly) to the basic conventions of the classical Attic theatre;
- whose knowledge of Euripides goes far beyond mere copying of scattered phrases and lines of verse;
- who is well versed in rhetorical technique, and exhibits a sensitivity to poetic balance and harmony;
- who draws on Scripture for his subject material, while expressing the thoughts and events in poetic language quite distinct from the phraseology of his sources;
- who is careful to adhere closely to the canonical version of the Passion, though allowing himself sporadic excursions inspired by apocryphal sources; and
- who uses poetry as the medium for expressing his own faith and theological insight.

Quite obviously, in the light of the suppositions on which this study is based, these observations do not constitute any proof of the authenticity of the play; but neither do they argue against the probability that Gregory of Nazianzus is indeed the author of the *Christus patiens*, as the manuscripts attest.

To what conclusion regarding the (in)authenticity of the play are we led by the external evidence?

The parallels with Romanos, and with George of Nicomedia, are independent witnesses to the fact that the *Christus patiens* existed, and was known, long before the 11th century. Thus the opinion which became popularized through the authority of Krumbacher, is revealed to be a flight of the imagination.

Furthermore, Romanos explicitly attributes the play – or, rather, the version of the events which he follows in his *kontakion* "On the Resurrection", and which corresponds to the version occurring in the play – to "the Theologian".

Note, however, that this also does not irrefutably prove the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*, as Tuilier would insist. It only proves that the attribution of this play to Gregory of Nazianzus was accepted without suspicion by Romanos.

Accordingly, the final conclusion of this study regarding the question of the play's authenticity, is that the earlier (*i.e.* 4th century) dating seems certain, while the authorship of Gregory of Nazianzus seems probable.

* * * * *