

A HISTORICAL-CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE PLAY  
CHRISTUS PATIENS,  
traditionally attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus

by

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ABSTRACT

A historical-critical evaluation of the play  
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Scholarly discussion of the *Christus patiens* (Χριστὸς πάσχων) has been dominated for decades by a dispute between defenders and opponents of the notion that its author was Gregory of Nazianzus. No specific alternative suggestion has enjoyed general acceptance; yet the opinion seems to persist, that the play is a product of the 11th or the 12th century. Even after the detailed defence of the play's authenticity by A. Tuilier (1969), the opponents of Gregorian authorship keep reiterating the same arguments which have for so long been feeding the dispute, and there seems to be a total lack of consensus concerning the relative validity of different kinds of arguments pertaining to this question.

In this study, a conclusion regarding the issue of the play's authenticity is based on a detailed examination of evidence gained from parallels between the play and different Byzantine authors. This examination of parallels, though, does not provide an illustration of the general literary features of the play. Therefore, the chapters dealing with these parallels are preceded by others, in which different aspects of the play's literary character are illustrated and discussed. These chapters reveal that the author of the *Christus patiens* adheres (though not slavishly) to the basic conventions of the Attic theatre; that he has knowledge of

Euripides going beyond the mere copying of scattered lines of verse; is well versed in rhetorical technique, and exhibits a sensitivity to poetic balance and harmony; draws on Scripture for his subject material, while expressing this in poetic language quite distinct from the phraseology of his sources; is careful to adhere closely to the canonical version of the Passion, though allowing himself sporadic excursions inspired by apocryphal sources; and uses poetry as the medium for expressing his own faith and theological insight.

These observations do not constitute independent proof of the authenticity of the play; but they also do not argue against the probability that Gregory of Nazianzus may indeed be the author of the *Christus patiens*, as the manuscripts attest.

External evidence - which is supposed in this study to take precedence over internal evidence regarding the play's (in)authenticity - independently witness to the fact that the play existed, and was known, long before the 11th century. Thus the opinion which was popularized through the authority of Krumbacher, is revealed to be a flight of the imagination.

Romanos explicitly attributes the play to "the Theologian". However, this does not irrefutably prove the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*; it seems to prove only that the attribution of this play to Gregory of Nazianzus was accepted without suspicion by Romanos.

Accordingly, the final conclusion of this study is that the earlier (i.e. 4th century) dating seems certain, while the authorship of Gregory of Nazianzus seems quite probable.

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## SAMEVATTING

'n Histories-kritiese beoordeling van die tragedie  
*Christus patiens*,  
wat toegeskryf word aan Gregorius Nazianzenus.

deur

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Kritiese bespreking van die *Christus patiens* (Χριστὸς πάσχων) word vir dekades reeds oorheers deur 'n dispuut tussen die voorstanders en teenstanders van die gedagte dat die outeur Gregorius van Nazianzus was. Hoewel geen spesifieke ander voorstel algemene aanvaarding geniet het nie, blyk dit dat baie kritici vas glo die drama dateer uit die 11de of 12de eeu. Selfs ná A. Tuilier (1969) se breedvoerige verdediging van die outeurskap van Gregorius, hou die teenstanders van hierdie gedagte steeds vol met dieselfde argumente as wat so lank al die dispuut aan die gang hou. Boonop lyk dit nie of daar enige konsensus bestaan oor die betreklike geldigheid van verskeie soorte argumente i.v.m. hierdie vraagstuk nie.

Die gevolgtrekking oor die outentisiteit van die drama wat in hierdie studie bereik word, berus op 'n noukeurige ontleding van die getuienis wat verkry word uit ooreenkomste tussen die drama en verskillende Bisantynse outeurs. Hierdie ontleding van parallelle bied ons egter nie 'n duidelike beeld van die algemene letterkundige eienskappe van die drama nie; daarom word vooraf eers 'n paar hoofstukke gewy aan die bespreking en verduideliking van die letterkundige aard van die *Christus patiens*. Uit hierdie bespreking blyk dit dat die outeur die grondliggende konvensies van die Attiese teaterwese navolg,

hoewel nie slaafs nie; dat sy kennis van Euripides verder strek as die blote oorskrywe van 'n aantal versreëls; dat hy bedrewe is in die retoriese tegniek, en 'n fyn aanvoeling het vir poëtiese ewewig en harmonie; dat hy Bybelse materiaal as roustof gebruik, maar dit tot uitdrukking laat kom in digterlike taal wat opmerklik verskil van die woordkeuse en styl van sy bronne; dat hy hom versigtig hou by die kanoniese weergawe van die Lydensgebeure, hoewel hy hom dit hier en daar veroorloof om apokriewe materiaal te integreer in die drama; en dat die poësie die natuurlike medium is waardeur sy eie geloof en teologiese insigte tot uiting kom.

Hierdie waarnemings is geen onafhanklike bewys van die drama se outentisiteit nie; maar dit staan ook geensins in die pad van die moontlikheid dat Gregorius van Nazianzus wel die outeur van die *Christus patiens* kan wees nie.

Eksterne getuienis - wat volgens 'n voorveronderstelling van hierdie studie die swaarste weeg wanneer dit gaan om die outentisiteit van die drama - bied onafhanklike aanduidings dat die *Christus patiens* bestaan het, en ook bekend was, lank voor die elfde eeu. Dus blyk dit dat die mening wat op gesag van veral Krumbacher algemeen aanvaar is, bloot 'n vlug van die verbeelding was.

Romanos het die drama in soveel woorde toegeskryf aan "die Teoloog" - oftewel Gregorius van Nazianzus. Dit bewys egter nie onteenseglik die outentisiteit van die drama nie; slegs dat Romanos geen bedenkinge gehad het oor die outeurskap van Gregorius nie.

Gevolgtrek is die slotsom van hierdie studie dat die vroeë datering van die stuk - d.w.s. in die vierde eeu - beslis korrek lyk, terwyl Gregorius heel waarskynlik die outeur was.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The title *Christus patiens* - or its Greek equivalent, viz. Χριστὸς πάσχων - is generally used by scholars when referring to the dramatic representation of the Passion of Christ, which is traditionally attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus. This title, however, is both unoriginal and incomplete. It does not occur in any of the manuscripts containing this play, but was first used by Antonius Bladus as the title of his edition of the text (published at Rome in 1542). The full title of this first printed edition reads Τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Ναζιανζηνοῦ τραγωδία Χριστὸς πάσχων. *Sancti Gregori Nazianzeni ... tragoedia Christus Patiens.*

In addition to indicating the author as Gregory of Nazianzus, Bladus defines the work as a tragedy. This definition occurs also in some of the manuscripts of the play, as attested by the title occurring in *codex Parisinus gr. 2875*: Γρηγορίου τοῦ θεολόγου, τραγωδία εἰς τὸ σωτήριον πάθος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. However, the definition of this work as ὑπόθεσις δραματικῆ occurs more frequently in the manuscript tradition, and is perhaps more descriptive. The earliest extant source of this definition is *Parisinus gr. 1220*, a manuscript dating from the first half of the 14th century. It contains the title Τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου τοῦ θεολόγου ὑπόθεσις δραματικῆ κατ' Εὐριπίδην περιέχουσα τὴν δι' ἡμᾶς γενομένην σάρκωσιν τοῦ σωτήρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ κοσμοσωτήριον πάθος.

The definition of the *Christus patiens* as "tragedy" recurs in most printed editions, from that of Bladus (1542) to that of Tuilier (1969). In fact, the latter refers to it in phrases like "la tragédie de la Passion du Christ" (p.9), "centon tragique sur la Passion du Christ" (p.11), and "la tragédie chrétienne par excellence" (p.19), but also in phrases like "drame mystique et initiatique" (p.9), and simply "drame". It should be noted from the outset that the play is not necessarily a tragedy, even though it exhibits many of the characteristic features of classical Greek tragedy.



The phrase κατ' Εὐριπίδην which occurs in the title preserved in *Parisinus gr. 1220*, deserves some special attention. It refers to the centonic nature of the *Christus patiens*, which is composed - partly, at least - of lines of verse borrowed from different plays of Euripides. In fact, the origins of a small number of lines have been traced to the *Agamemnon* and the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, and to Lycophron's *Cassandra*; but the vast majority of lines which reveal influence from classical sources, are derived from Euripidean plays: mainly the *Bacchae*, *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, and *Rhesus*, while the *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, and *Troades* are also represented.

The following example may serve to illustrate how lines and passages from the famous 5th century BC tragic poet have been adapted to an entirely new context:

Lines 101-115 of the *Christus patiens* constitute part of the dialogue between the mother of the Lord and a group of women from Galilee, who accompany her. They bring terrible news:

Πότνια, πότνα, σεμνοτάτα παρθένε·  
αἶ αἶ αἶ αἶ·  
Πολλὴ μὲν ἐν βροτοῖσι κοῦκ ἀνώνυμος  
ἀγνή κέκλησαι, τῆσδε γῆς ὅσοι πέδον  
ναίουσι, λαμπρὸν φῶς ὀρῶντες ἡλίου· 105  
τανῦν δὲ τάλαιν' ἡ πάλαι μακαρία.

*Lady, our Lady, most venerable Virgin,  
Alas! Alas!  
You are great and glorious among mortals,  
known as "the holy one" to all who inhabit this world  
- all who look upon the bright light of the sun; 105  
but wretched now, though formerly you were blest.*

She takes this to mean that she herself is in danger:

Τί δ' ἐστίν; ἢ πω τίς μ' ἀποκτεῖναι θέλει;  
*What does this mean? Is someone planning to kill me?*

Her companions try to correct this wrong impression:

Οὐκ, ἀλλὰ Παῖς θνήσκει σὸς ὑπ' ἀλαστόρων.  
*No, but your Son is being killed by a vindictive crowd.*

She is shaken by these words:

Οἴμοι, τί λέξεις; ὥς μ' ἀπόλεσας, γύναι.

*Oh no! What do you mean? You have destroyed me, madam!*

But they insist:

Ἦς οὐκέτ' ὄντος Υἱέος φρόντιζε δῆ.

110

*Indeed you should think of your Son as dead already.*

Her reaction to these words reveal that she has not yet realized the full implications of her Son's mission:

Ἦ δεινὰ λέξασ', οὐχὶ συγκλείσεις στόμα  
καὶ πᾶν μεθήσεις ἀπρεπῆς ῥῆμ' ἐκφέρειν;  
Τὸν ὄντ' ἀεὶ γὰρ μηκέτ' εἶναι πῶς λέγεις;  
Εὖφημος ἴσθι, κἄν τί σοι χρεῖα λέγειν,  
λέγ' ὥς προσήκει, μηδ' ἀτιμάσης Θεόν.

115

*What horrors have you spoken of! Why not rather be quiet and stop uttering inappropriate words? How could you say that the eternal one is "dead already"? Speak reverently; and if you have to say something, say what is proper; do not dishonour God.*

115

With the exception of 106 and 113, all of these lines have been borrowed either from the *Hippolytus* or from the *Medea* of Euripides, and have been adapted in the following manner:

Πότνια, πότνια, σεμνοτάτα παρθένε (101) is evidently taken from the *Hippolytus*, line 61 (πότνια πότνια σεμνοτάτα). Note the Doric α in σεμνοτάτα - quite in place, since it belongs to the speech regarded as proper for the choruses of 5th century Tragedy. The chorus in the *Christus patiens*, however, speaks in iambic trimeters; thus the line had to be extended by adding παρθένε - a term which perfectly fits the new context, and which occurs also at line 66 of the *Hippolytus*, where Artemis is called καλλίστα πολὺ παρθένων.

The exclamation αἶ αἶ αἶ αἶ (102) equals - in sound, at any rate - the αἶαἶ ἔ ἔ occurring in line 595 of the *Hippolytus*. It seems that the author of the *Christus patiens* consciously resisted the temptation of adding to it the remainder of *Hippolytus* 595, viz. πρόδοτος ἐκ φίλων.

The next three lines (103-105) have been composed from the

first four lines of the *Hippolytus*. When comparing

Πολλὴ μὲν ἐν βροτοῖσι κοῦκ ἀνώνυμος  
ἀγνή κέκλησαι, τῆσδε γῆς ὅσοι πέδον  
ναίουσι, λαμπρὸν φῶς ὀρῶντες ἡλίου

to the opening lines of the Euripidean play –

Πολλὴ μὲν ἐν βροτοῖσι κοῦκ ἀνώνυμος  
θεὰ κέκλημαι Κύπρις, οὐρανοῦ τ' ἔσω·  
ὅσοι τε Πόντου θερμόνων τ' Ἀτλαντικῶν  
ναίουσιν εἴσω, φῶς ὀρῶντες ἡλίου

– the following changes are worth noting:

- 1) The phrase ἀγνή κέκλησαι (104) is a necessary substitute for θεὰ κέκλημαι in line 2 of the *Hippolytus*.
- 2) The relative phrase introduced by ὅσοι has βροτοῖσι as its antecedent in the *Christus patiens*, whereas in the *Hippolytus* it refers to the following lines, while forming part of a syntactic unit which is independent of the first two lines.

Though some may regard the application of phrases originally describing the goddess Aphrodite to the mother of the Lord as being offensive, the point of these lines is clarified by the antithesis of line 106 (πανῶν δὲ τάλαιν' ἢ πάλαι μακαρία). The adjective τάλαινα, which is the main focus of the entire passage, is contrasted to μακαρία – evidently a reference to Luke 1.48: ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί. It seems, then, that this notion of all generations calling the mother of the Lord "blessed" – μακαρία – led the author of the *Christus patiens* to apply to her the description which he borrowed, with the modification required, from the *Hippolytus*.

Lines 107–110 have been borrowed – with some modification – from the *Medea* (1308–1311), where Jason is informed by the chorus that his sons have been killed. He misinterprets their words as implying that Medea is planning to kill him too:

Jason: Τί δ' ἔστιν; ἦ που κάμ' ἀποκτεῖναι θέλει;

*What is it? Is she really trying to kill me too?*

Chorus: Παῖδες τεθνήσι χειρὶ μητρῶα σέθεν.

*Your sons have been killed by their mother's hand.*

Jason: Οἴμοι, τί λέξεις; ὥς μ' ἀπόλεσας, γύναι. 1310

*Oh no! What do you mean? You have killed me, madam!*

Chorus: Ὡς οὐκέτ' ὄντων σῶν τέκνων φρόντιζε δῆ.

*Think but of your sons as not living any more.*

The changes which the author of the *Christus patiens* has made to these lines, are merely those required by the difference in context:

- 1) The phrase καὶ μ' ἀποκτεῖναι of *Medea* 1308 has been changed to τις μ' ἀποκτεῖναι, since a point of reference for *me too* – like the killing of Creon and his daughter in the *Medea* – does not exist in the *Christus patiens*.
- 2) Line 108 (οὐκ, ἀλλὰ Παῖς θνήσκει σὸς ὑπ' ἀλαστόρων) is the result of considerable modification: Apart from a change in number (from παῖδες...σέθεν to παῖς...σός), and the change in agent, the perfect tense had to be made present, and a corrective formula (οὐκ, ἀλλά ...) had to be inserted before the blunt statement παῖς θνήσκει σός.
- 3) Line 1310 of the *Medea* could be used *verbatim* as line 109 of the *Christus patiens*.
- 4) Line 110 has the singular form οὐκέτ' ὄντος Υἱέος for the plural οὐκέτ' ὄντων σῶν τέκνων of *Medea* 1311.

For lines 111-115, the author of the *Christus patiens* took two lines from the *Hippolytus* (498-9) and two from the *Medea* (1319-20), and joined them to a single line of his own:

Ὦ δεινὰ λέξασ', οὐχὶ συγκλείσεις στόμα (Ἡπρ. 498)  
καὶ πᾶν μεθήσεις ἀπρεπὲς ῥῆμ' ἐκφέρειν; (499, modified)  
Τὸν ὄντ' αἰεὶ γὰρ μηκέτ' εἶναι πῶς λέγεις;  
Εὐφημος ἴσθι, κἄν τί σοι χρεῖα λέγειν, (Med. 1319-20,  
λέγ' ὡς προσήκει, μηδ' ἀτιμάσης Θεόν. modified)

Note the result of this process, in terms of the rhetorical structure of the passage. On the phonological, syntactical, and semantic levels, it shows a fine balancing of elements, and a striking interplay of opposites. The chiasmus of lines 111-2 (λέξασα – συγκλείσεις στόμα – μεθήσεις – ῥῆμ' ἐκφέρειν) is reflected in an inverse chiastic pattern in lines 114-5: εὐφημος ἴσθι – χρεῖα λέγειν – λέγε – μηδ' ἀτιμάσης. Together these lines form a concentric pattern around line 113, which contains a powerful *oxymoron*: ὄντ(α) – αἰεὶ – μηκέτι – εἶναι. This line is indeed the focal point of the passage, which is developed into an emphatic claim that Jesus is Θεός.

Yet this passage remains a compound of verses, of which the greater part is not the author's own, "original" work.

To the question whether this type of composition represents – or does not represent – acceptable literary practice, the answers of critics would probably greatly vary. The relevant question, however, is whether the author of the cento himself regarded it as a commendable literary product. The answer to this is to be found in the introductory words of the ὑπόθεσις or argument of the play:

Ἐπεὶδ' ἀκούσας εὐσεβῶς ποιημάτων  
ποιητικῶς νῦν εὐσεβῆ κλύειν θέλεις,  
πρόφρων ἄκουε· νῦν τε κατ' Εὐριπίδην  
τὸ κοσμοσωτήριον ἐξερῶ πάθος, etc.

*Since – having listened respectfully to poetry – you now want to hear of the revered things in poetic fashion, listen attentively; and in the manner of Euripides I will now tell you of the Passion which saved the world ...*

These programmatic words plainly indicate that the author is aware of, or at the least is assuming, a need, on the part of his reader(s), for a poetic version or presentation of the events relating to the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note the specific meaning of ἀκούω in this context: it signifies listening to poetry which is being read aloud, as it was the normal practice in ancient times. (This verifies the opinion of scholars like K. Mitsakis and others, that the text of the *Christus patiens* was meant to be read rather than performed.) The semantic parallelism in the references to the way in which the reader has listened to poetry and should now listen to this cento (ἀκούσας εὐσεβῶς – πρόφρων ἄκουε), suggests that the author regarded the need of a poetic version of the Passion as sufficient reason to imitate the tragic poet.

The *Christus patiens* follows its Euripidean models in more respects than simply copying, either *verbatim* or in adapted form, a certain number of iambic trimeter lines. This will be illustrated in the chapters dealing with the exposition of specific parts of the text. Let it suffice to say, at this stage, that the Euripidean influence is clearly exhibited in the plot construction, the characterization, and also in the rhetorical structure of every set speech in this cento.

### **Manuscripts and editions:**

The Greek text of the *Christus patiens* is extant in 25 manuscripts which antedate the first printed edition. All of these date from the middle of the 13th to the first half of the 16th century. For a detailed discussion of the manuscript tradition of this play, the reader is referred to A. Tuilier (1969) pp. 75-116. As far as the text in print is concerned, the *editio princeps* - the text published by A. Bladus in 1542 - was followed by a large number of editions, many of which simply reprinted the text of their predecessors. Critical editions of the text were published by F. Dübner (1846), by J. G. Brambs (1885, in the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana*), and by A. Tuilier (1969; no. 149 of the series *Sources Chrétiennes*). All quotations from the *Christus patiens* in this study, are according to Tuilier's text.

### **Translations:**

During the course of the past four centuries, the *Christus patiens* has been posing a challenge to the interpretative skills, and even the poetic talents, of many translators. The earliest attempt to be recorded, is a translation into Latin verse, by Claudio Roillet. This translation must have been made some time before 1642, and it accompanies the Greek text in volume 38 of J. P. Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, where it is printed in the bottom margin. The Benedictine monks of St. Maur did not hesitate to produce their own Latin prose translation, which is also printed in Migne (1862). The edition of Dübner (1846) contains a Latin prose translation of unidentified origin. It reads rather like an emended copy of the Benedictine version, which may have been available to Dübner in the edition of the works of Gregory of Nazianzus published by A. B. Caillau (1840).

Besides these Latin versions, the *Christus patiens* has also been translated into some modern European languages, viz. French, German, modern Greek and Italian. All of the existing German versions are verse translations: Hugo Grotius (1748), A. Ellissen (1855), and E. A. Pullig (1893) attempted to reproduce in their own language not only the content, but

also the poetic character of the Greek text. This aim is clearly stated on the title pages of these publications: cf. Ellissen's phrase "in metrischer Verdeutschung", and Pullig's "übersetzt im Versmasse der Urschrift".

In France, interest in the study of the *Christus patiens* was revived by the middle of the 19th century, mainly due to the publication, in Paris, of the editions by Caillau (1840) and Dübner (1846). This led to the publication of translations of the play in the French language. The mere extracts translated by J. A. Lalanne (1852) were soon followed by a complete French prose translation, done by Douhet (1854) and published in the *Nouvelle Encyclopédie Théologique*. Even after the publication of Brambs' edition of the Greek text in 1885, M. de la Rousselière (1895) still preferred to base his French translation on the Caillau edition. It would be another seven decades before the publication of a French translation based upon a good textcritical edition of the *Christus patiens* - that of A. Tuilier (1969).

In Athens, Panagiotēs Soutsos (1839) published an adaptation of the *Christus patiens* in Greek verse: 'Ο Μεσσίας ἢ τὰ πάθη Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ... κατὰ μίμησιν τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Ναζιανζηνοῦ ποιήσαντος τὸν Χριστὸν πάσχοντα.

The rendering of the *Christus patiens* in the Italian language is an interesting field of study on its own. The earliest verse translation, intended for performance at the *Collegio dei Nobili* at Parma, was done by C. Martirano (circa 1786). However, at least two other (unpublished) translations into Italian have been made before the end of the 18th century. In the *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale* in Firenze, there is a 16th century manuscript containing a translation of the *Christus patiens* by Giovanni di Nicolò da Falgano; and the library of the University of Bologna is in possession of an 18th century manuscript titled "S. Gregorio Nazianzeno, *Cristo piangente*, Tragedia trasportata dalla lingua greca nella volgare fedelmente da Antonio Cavallerino". The 20th century has seen two more attempts to bring the *Christus patiens* to the Italian stage: O. Prosciutti (1949) translated the play into Italian

prose, and R. Cantarella (1953) published a "traduzione e adattamento scenico", drastically reducing the 2602 verses of the original to 971 lines in the adapted version.

As far as the present author knows, no English translation of the *Christus patiens* has yet been published.

### **Contents of the play:**

The main characters of the *Christus patiens* are the mother of Jesus (indicated in the *didascalia* as θεοτόκος), the disciple whom Jesus loved (nowhere identified by the name John - he is referred to as ἐπιστήθιος or παρθένος in the text; θεολόγος in the *didascalia*), and a χορός of young women who accompany and support the Virgin in her moments of anguish. The minor characters are: Christ, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, two different angels and five different messengers. In addition to these, the Jewish High Priests, the guard, and Pilate are introduced, in a scene which is developed out of a messenger speech occurring in the third part of the play.

The "action" commences just before dawn, on the day Jesus is to be crucified. The prologue - a quite lengthy monologue - is spoken by the mother of the Lord. The play is subdivided into three parts, comprising the crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. It is concluded by a hymnic prayer to the Saviour, and an invocation to the Virgin, in which she is begged - as πρέσβις εὐπρόσδεκτος to her Son - for protection against evils both visible and invisible.

The following summary is intended, not as a literary analysis of any sort, but simply as an introduction to the plot, and a handy reference guide to the text itself:

#### **First part: The Crucifixion:**

- 1-90: The θεοτόκος speaks about her role in the divine mystery of the incarnation and redemption, and of the anguish which it causes her to hear that her Son is brought to trial. She is anxious to see what



- is happening to him, but her companions (the χορός) have persuaded her to wait until dawn.
- 91-97: The χορός warns the θεοτόκος of an armed crowd rushing through the city, carrying torches.
- 98-110: The θεοτόκος sees a messenger approaching, and the χορός tells her the content of his report: her son is about to be killed.
- 111-119: The θεοτόκος finds it unthinkable that the immortal could be killed.
- 120-123: The χορός confirms that Jesus is going to die.
- 124-129: The χορός announces the arrival of a messenger: one of the disciples.
- 130-139: The messenger announces that Jesus has been betrayed, not by an enemy, but by one regarded as a friend.
- 140-146: The traitor is identified as the treasurer of the disciples. The θεοτόκος is shocked, and inquires about his motives.
- 147-180: The messenger tells of Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives, and of the betrayal in the garden.
- 181-182: The θεοτόκος interrupts the report, asking what Jesus has answered the traitor.
- 183-266: The messenger tells of Jesus' answer, of the arrest and of the disciples who fled. Then he reports the words of someone - an angel or a human being - whom he heard addressing and scornfully accusing the traitor.
- 267-357: The θεοτόκος reacts to the news of Judas' treason, in a speech which contrasts the baseness of his actions to the universally acknowledged goodness of Jesus. She wishes death for the traitor, but expects to see her Son still alive.
- 358-368: The χορός announces the arrival of a second messenger, who reports that the death sentence has been pronounced on Jesus by the Council.
- 369-375: To the θεοτόκος this means almost as much as her own death; but she rapidly recovers and asks the messenger for a more detailed report.
- 376-418: The messenger tells how he arrived in the city, and witnessed the trial of Jesus before Pilate: The

- governor did not find any guilt in the accused, but the crowd insisted that he had to be crucified. He will be taken out of the city gates at dawn.
- 419-436: The θεοτόκος sees this as a great calamity – to the Hebrew people, who will be punished for planning to kill a divine person.
- 437-443: The χορός tries to convince the θεοτόκος that her Son is going to die, which she does not accept.
- 444-450: For the first time the θεοτόκος sees her Son in the hands of his captors. This is not what she has been expecting.
- 451-452: The χορός reminds her that Jesus himself has said before, that he would suffer by the hands of a vindictive people (ἀλάστορες).
- 453-477: In a passage of deep *pathos*, the θεοτόκος begs her Son not to go away from her without a word. She then calls on the χορός to follow Jesus.
- 478-500: The χορός advises her to follow the procession at a safe distance, to which she agrees.
- 501-559: After retiring to a safe lookout, the θεοτόκος realizes that there is really no point in avoiding the angry crowd; for her life means nothing to her, if she is deprived of the hope she has in her Son. This hope is based on her knowledge that He is the Word Incarnate, to whom she has given birth in a miraculous way. On this she dwells at length.
- 560-567: The χορός shares her trust in the divinity of Jesus, of which they cite the following evidence: the midwife's report (*cf.* the *Protevangelium* of James, 19-20), the Archangel's message, and the divine deeds which Jesus has done.
- 568-597: The θεοτόκος explains to them the divine plan of redemption, which she understands by grace of the Word who has resided in her, and which fills her with joyous hope. Yet at the moment she is grief-stricken.
- 598-604: The χορός acknowledges her superior understanding of the present events and of their outcome.
- 605-616: Despite this, the θεοτόκος is overwhelmed by grief.
- 617-638: The χορός divides itself into two ἡμιχόρια. The

first of these is confused by the oscillation between fear and hope on the part of the θεοτόκος, while the second intends passively to ride out the tide of grief, leaving it to the θεοτόκος to remain confident.

- 639-651: A messenger arrives, who has difficulty telling the θεοτόκος that her son is about to die.
- 652-656: The θεοτόκος asks how he is dying – Christ, the Son of the immortal Father, whom she has believed to be the immortal saviour of Israel.
- 657-681: The messenger reports the events of the crucifixion.
- 682-726: The θεοτόκος discards her fear of the crowd, and approaches the scene of the crucifixion. She sees her Son (695 *ff.*), whose features are distorted almost beyond recognition. Though she understands the redeeming purpose of these events, she finds the sight unbearable.
- 727-737: Christ entrusts her to the care of John (*cf.* Jn 19) and comforts her with encouraging words.
- 738-760: The θεοτόκος voices her concern for the Jewish people, who are bound to be punished for what they have done. She dreads the prospect of being left behind by her Son.
- 761-766: Christ encourages her with the promise of future blessings.
- 767-795: Again the θεοτόκος begs her Son not to leave her behind. She pleads with him to have mercy on the descendants of the Jews.
- 796-801: Christ confirms that her requests will be granted.
- 802-819: The θεοτόκος praises his εὐγένεια and προμήθεια. Then she pleads on behalf of Peter, whose backstage cries of anguish she has heard.
- 820-828: Christ forgives Peter, saying that he grants his mother's request because of her εὐσέβεια and her φρῆν ἀγαθή. He asks her also to forgive those who have nailed him to the cross.
- 829-833: The θεοτόκος praises the φρῆν εὐμενεστάτη of Jesus.
- 834-837: He prompts her to retire from the angry crowd (the δυσμενεῖς), assuring her that he will see to all her requests.

- 838-847: About to leave, the θεοτόκος hears Jesus cry out that he is thirsty. The χορός also is disturbed at hearing this.
- 848-931: In a lengthy monologue, the θεοτόκος now reacts to the death of her Son. She has a profound insight in the purpose and meaning of his death, but is deeply moved by the personal loss which it means to her. (Cf. especially lines 876-7.)
- 932-982: St. John (the θεολόγος) encourages her, and focuses her attention on the day of the resurrection, while interpreting the events of the Passion in terms of what Jesus himself has said about it beforehand.
- 983-997: The θεοτόκος expresses her appreciation of the filial concern shown to her by the θεολόγος, in a passage which reflects the themes of 848-931.
- 998-1007: The θεολόγος reaffirms his sympathy, but also his faith in the promise of the resurrection.
- 1008-1018: Though yearning for the third day, the θεοτόκος is yet unable to free herself from her present grief.
- 1019-1041: The χορός again divides itself into two ἡμιχόρια. The first of these expresses sympathy with the θεοτόκος, who bears a heavier burden than any woman who knows from the outset that her child is mortal.
- 1042-1045: The second ἡμιχόριον acknowledges the superior wisdom of the θεοτόκος.
- 1046-1062: The θεοτόκος utters an imprecation against the murderers of the Lord.
- 1063-1070: The combined χορός now repeat their view that the θεοτόκος suffers more than normal mothers who mourn for children whom they have known to be mortal.
- 1071-1094: The θεοτόκος notices the soldier who pierces the side of Jesus. She perceives also his abrupt change of attitude, and his confession. (Cf. 1087.)
- 1095-1109: Interpreting the miracle of blood and water flowing separately from the wound in Jesus' side, the χορός expects divine justice.
- 1110-1133: In a final invocation to Jesus on the cross, the θεοτόκος laments her own loss, expresses concern about his burial, and confirms her faith in the promise of the resurrection.

## Second part: The Burial of Christ:

- 1134-1147: St. John (the θεολόγος) announces the arrival of Joseph of Arimathea, followed by Nicodemus.
- 1148-1188: Dialogue between John and Joseph, who has come to fetch and bury Jesus, but reports that the Jews have asked Pilate to prevent him being buried.
- 1189-1246: John comforts Joseph: Christ, who has manifestly been revealed to be divine, will be buried in view of the expected resurrection on the third day.
- 1247-1275: The θεοτόκος greets Joseph and Nicodemus. Although she is cautioned by Joseph, she stays at the cross to assist in the burial preparations.
- 1276-1308: After trying once more to dissuade the θεοτόκος from helping in the burial, Joseph and Nicodemus take Jesus down from the cross and hand him to her.
- 1309-1426: In one of the longest monologues of the play, the θεοτόκος laments the death of her son, giving free expression to the maternal love which binds her to him. Regarding the divine mystery of redemption, she states that it was all planned even before God created the universe. She recalls her maidenhood, the birth of Christ, and the fact that she did not expect he would have to die for the redemption of mankind. Noticing with appreciation the care which John and Joseph have taken, she reflects that the deceased do not really benefit from such offerings, but from being released from bondage in Hades – the divine mystery which has been foreshadowed by John the Baptist and by Jonah. On this she bases her hope in the resurrection, while indicating that Pilate and Judas will not escape punishment.
- 1427-1465: Joseph announces the death of Judas, which the θεοτόκος interprets as a manifestation of divine justice. Guiding Joseph and Nicodemus in the final burial preparations, she expresses her grief in a lament containing three anapaestic lines (1461-3).
- 1466-1488: Joseph and Nicodemus carry the body of Jesus to the tomb.

- 1489-1619: The θεοτόκος follows them to the tomb, where she speaks about the meaning and effect of the death of Christ: It implies victory over death; but the Jewish people will be punished for their unbelief and for their rejection of the Son of God. Finally, she invites Joseph and Nicodemus to spend the night at John's home, to await the dawn of the third day.
- 1620-1636: John approves of this decision, and they all go to his house, in order to be quite near to the tomb.
- 1637-1699: In reaction to Joseph's farewell words to Jesus, as if to a friend finally separated from him by his death, the θεολόγος explains to Joseph the mystery of redemption in Christ - the basic reason for his incarnation and death. Yet the people who planned to kill him will be banished from their land.
- 1700-1711: Joseph anticipates suffering the same fate as his countrymen - a fate which he fears more than death.
- 1712-1765: The θεολόγος explains that this is the fate which the Jewish people deserve, for their stubbornness since the time of the prophets. But Christ will rise from the dead, and will save Joseph too.
- 1766-1796: Convinced by the θεολόγος, Joseph now shares in the anticipation of the third day.
- 1797-1817: Prompted by the θεοτόκος to proclaim God's power, and encouraged by the θεολόγος, Nicodemus and Joseph depart. The others go to John's house.
- 1818-1854: Dialogue between the θεοτόκος and two ἡμιχόρια: All night she has been awake, lamenting Jesus' death.
- 1855-1883: Rising at dawn on the sabbath day, the women see a messenger approaching. He informs them of the guard who has been sent to the tomb, presumably in order to prevent the disciples from stealing the body.
- 1884-1905: The θεοτόκος pities the scribes and elders, who do not realize their own folly. Perhaps, she says, the guard will be an eye-witness to the resurrection.

### Third part: The Resurrection:

- 1906-1940: Before dawn, on the day after the sabbath, the θεοτόκος suggests that one of the women should go to the tomb as a scout.
- 1941-1963: Mary Magdalene offers to undertake this task. The χορός and the Virgin will follow after a while.
- 1964-1979: Magdalene hopes to be rewarded for her efforts by witnessing the resurrection.
- 1980-1991: The θεοτόκος decides to accompany Magdalene.
- 1992-2030: They depart in the direction of the tomb, while the θεοτόκος expresses her intense longing to see her divine son resurrected.
- 2031-2037: Magdalene notices the absence of the guards.
- 2038-2042: They wonder who will roll away the large stone.
- 2043-2053: Magdalene sees that the stone has been removed. She reports this to the disciples, and quickly returns.
- 2054-2059: The θεοτόκος sees a shining figure sitting on the stone. The guards have become like dead men.
- 2060-2075: The angel tells them that Jesus has risen from the dead. They should tell the news to the disciples; to Peter especially.
- 2076-2083: The θεοτόκος is filled with joy.
- 2084-2107: On their way to tell the disciples, Christ appears to them. They kneel down before Him, but He sends them off to tell the disciples.
- 2108-2115: The joy of the θεοτόκος is beyond description.
- 2116-2133: Seeing the other women approaching, Magdalene joins them and returns to the tomb. They see a youth sitting in the tomb, who repeats the message of the first angel.
- 2134-2173: Magdalene wants to go and tell Peter and the others immediately, but the χορός is fearful at first.
- 2174-2190: A messenger, bringing the news of the resurrection, learns that the θεοτόκος knows already.
- 2191-2269: The messenger tells how the guards have run to the Jewish council, and reports the contents of their discussion: The guards told of the strange events which occurred at the tomb, but the council bribed them to remain silent. Accepting the bribe, the

guards yet insisted on telling the council of their experience at the tomb.

2270-2295: At this point, the chief priests and the guards are introduced directly: The priests use threats in order to secure the silence of the guards, but they insist on the truth of the resurrection.

2296-2377: Now Pilate is also introduced. He wants to know why the guards are so frightened. When they say it is because the body has been stolen, he is furious, suspecting that the guards are lying to him.

2378-2388: The messenger concludes his report, saying that the guards are proclaiming everything they have seen.

2389-2414: The θεοτόκος welcomes the news, although it implies inevitable doom for the Jewish council. She calls on her companions to return once more to the tomb.

2415-2479: From the ensuing dialogue we learn that Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves, after Mary Magdalene had told them about the empty tomb. The events as witnessed by Magdalene, are described again (*cf.* Jn 20.1-18). She also reports that Jesus appeared to two others, who were walking along a country road (*cf.* Mk 16.12; Lk 24.13-35).

2480-2503: The women reach the house of Mary, where Cleopas is telling how Jesus has appeared to him on the road. At that moment the Lord appears among them, though the doors have been locked.

2504-2531: Christ greets them, and assures them that it is not a ghost appearing to them, but He himself. He sends them into the world to proclaim the Gospel, and bestows on them the presence of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Epilogue:**

2532-2602: The play is concluded by a prayer to the Saviour, followed by an invocation to the Virgin, in which she is begged - as πρέσβις εὐπρόσδεκτος to her Son (2589) - for protection against evil.

\* \* \* \* \*



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF THE PLAY

An aspect of the *Christus patiens* which has deliberately been ignored in chapter 1, is the question regarding the identity of its author. The answer to this question, by the middle of the sixteenth century, seemed straightforward: St. Gregory of Nazianzus. In the more recent publications on the *Christus patiens*, however, the reader will simply not find unqualified indications of its author and date of composition.

The reason is that the *editio princeps* - the text published by A. Bladus in 1542 - followed the manuscript tradition in attributing this Euripidean cento to Gregory of Nazianzus; but since 1571 this attribution has been contested. The first doubts about the correctness of the manuscript attribution were expressed in that year by I. Leuvenklaius. His remarks served to initiate a scholarly dispute which would prove to be unique, both in respect of its persistence and in respect of its complexity. As far as persistence is concerned: after more than four centuries, the dispute is still very much alive. As far as complexity is concerned: the arguments advanced in the course of this dispute involve aspects of poetic style, metre, language, literary genre, biography, history, and theology, to name but the most important.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the different arguments which have been advanced in support of, or in opposition to, the traditional attribution to the Nazianzen, the complexity of the problem may be illustrated from another perspective, by listing the alternatives which have been suggested to accepting the Nazianzen as author of the *Christus patiens*. These are - in chronological order of being suggested by different critics - Apollinaris of Laodicea (either the elder or the younger), Gregory of Antioch, John Chrysostom, a certain Stephen (Stephanus), some unknown monk with limited knowledge of the plays of Euripides, John (or his brother Isaac) Tzetzes, Theodorus Prodromus, Constantine Manasses; and in addition to all the above, there is the frequently

recurring suggestion that the play has been composed by an anonymous versificator of the 11th or the 12th century. The reader should bear in mind that the proponents of all these suggestions believed they had positive proof, or, at least, reasonable probability, supporting their hypotheses; also that even after four centuries, a unanimous scholarly opinion regarding the issue seems unattainable.

During the course of the debate, various arguments have been advanced to support or to oppose the traditional attribution, and many more in support of or in opposition to alternative suggestions. It goes almost without saying that those arguments considered by their proponents to be incontestable were the ones which met with the most vigorous opposition.

A survey of the major events marking this debate can be found in the *introduction* of the edition of A. Tuilier (1969). It aims at giving an objective account, but being a supporter of the traditional attribution of the play to Gregory Nazianzen, Tuilier tends to omit contributions not directly in favour of or opposed to the issue of Gregorian authorship. For a more comprehensive survey of all relevant contributions the reader is referred to F. Trisoglio (1974), whose 238 footnotes constitute a valuable bibliography covering publications from 1571 to 1972.

Trisoglio discusses, in chronological order, the different contributions to the debate concerning the authorship of the *Christus patiens*. It would serve no purpose to repeat here all the details of his account; however, it is necessary to provide some framework in which the relevant material can be studied. Therefore the following discussion is not presented as a chronological account, but is structured according to a classification of the arguments relevant to the question.

The reasons for this different approach are the following:

- 1) Simply keeping count of the opponents and the defenders of Gregorian authorship will not lead to any conclusion; their arguments have to be considered and evaluated.
- 2) In the course of the debate, some arguments are neglected

or forgotten for years, and afterwards re-introduced. In a purely chronological survey of the debate, the impact of such arguments may be missed.

3) The scope of the relevant arguments is much wider and more complicated than simply opposing, or assenting to, the traditional attribution of the play to Gregory of Nazianzus. This can better be illustrated by deviating from the strictly chronological approach found in both Tuilier's *introduction* and Trisoglio's article.

After expounding all the relevant arguments in this way, the period since 1969 will be discussed in chronological order, because (1) this will provide a supplement to Trisoglio's article, adding more recent publications to the bibliography, and (2) it will reveal that no new arguments have recently been introduced into the debate.

#### **Classification of the arguments:**

After a survey of all the relevant publications, it seemed practical to divide the arguments advanced during the course of the debate into the following categories:

##### **- Stylistic arguments:**

This category includes arguments involving a comparison of the stylistic features of the *Christus patiens* to those of other works by Gregory of Nazianzus. The arguments relate to *gravitas*, *acumen*, *elegantia*, *nobilitas*, tragic versus comic diction, the frequency of comparisons, variety versus monotony, piquancy, etc.

##### **- Metrical arguments:**

These are the arguments concerning prosodic laws and the degree to which they are observed.

##### **- Linguistic arguments:**

Arguments concerning vocabulary, morphology, and syntax are presented under this heading.

##### **- Literary arguments:**

These arguments involve a comparison of the *Christus patiens* to other dramatic literature - especially to the works of Euripides. They concern dramatic composition, the formal elements of ancient Greek tragedy, dramatic conventions,

characterization, the definition of the *Christus patiens* as *tragicomoedia*, the motivation for composing a cento, as well as - surprisingly - charges of plagiarism.

**- Historical arguments:**

This category includes the arguments concerning biographical data, the history of textual tradition (both of the *Christus patiens* and of the plays of Euripides), influence upon or from other christian literature, the historical circumstances favourable to the composition of a cento, and the existence or absence of other centos comparable to this one.

**- Theological arguments:**

Arguments concerning christology, mariology, adherence to the canonical sources, apocryphal inspiration, *decorum*, and the polemical nature of the *Christus patiens* are presented and discussed under this heading. The reader will note that the sub-category of mariology is in itself quite comprehensive, including arguments concerning the characterization of the Virgin, the doctrine of intercession, the veneration of Mary, and terms of honour referring to the Mother of Christ, among which the title θεοτόκος (*deipara*) is the one most frequently entering into the dispute.

**Discussion of the arguments:**

**2.1 STYLISTIC ARGUMENTS:**

The first doubts to be expressed regarding the correctness of the manuscript attribution of the *Christus patiens* to Gregory of Nazianzus, were based upon stylistic considerations. In 1571, I. Leuvenklaius wrote that he found it difficult to be persuaded of the Gregorian authorship of this "tragoedia seu potius tragicomoedia", because it lacked the *acumen* and the refinement (or symmetry - τὸ στρογγύλον) characteristic of the Nazianzen.

Similar sentiments were expressed also at Cambridge, when W. Perkins (1611, col.236) wrote: "Gregorii Nazianzeni tragoedia non sapit stylum Gregorii" - the tragedy does not "know" the style of Gregory. (Is this to be interpreted as indicating criticism of the attribution to Gregory, or simply as a

factual observation of the stylistic differences between two different poetic types, perhaps implying a censure of Gregory for composing in a literary type in which his personal style did not find its free expression? Both Tuilier and Trisoglio hint at the first possibility, but the quotation from Perkins contains no explicit clues.)

The first alternative to be proposed as a more likely author than Gregory Nazianzen, was Apollinaris of Laodicea. This possibility was suggested by C. Baronius in 1588, and seems to have been considered acceptable by R. Bellarminus, who expressed his opinion about the play in the following words (1613, p.77): "Tragoedia, *Christus patiens*, non videtur habere gravitatem solitam Nazianzeno, praesertim cum describitur eiulatus matris Christi, quae prudentissima et constantissima erat." (In fact, the association of *gravitas* with an acceptable characterization of the mother of Christ indicates to me that cardinal Bellarminus, when using this term, was probably confusing poetic or rhetorical style with seemliness - *decorum* - as regarded from his own religious perspective. The phrase in which Caillau (1840) uses the term - *gravitas sermonis* - seems to support this suspicion, unless the term itself has undergone a change of meaning between the 17th and the 19th centuries.)

G. J. Vossius (1647, vol.2, p.72) defines proper tragic diction as speech which matches the solemnity of the matters it describes; he then states that in the *Christus patiens* Gregory Nazianzen errs in this respect. "Eius dictio tragica subinde in orationibus; comica magis in tragoedia: nisi tragoediae eius, ut aliquibus visum, auctor potius sit Apollinaris" - thus accepting the possibility of Apollinarian instead of Gregorian authorship, by virtue of the stylistic differences which he notices between the *Christus patiens* and the speeches of the Nazianzen. This opinion of Vossius regarding the diction of the *Christus patiens* is shared by A. Baillet (1685-6, vol.4.2, p.457), the only difference being that Baillet seems more reluctant to accept the notion of Apollinarian authorship.

This type of argumentation, however, is not common to all scholars of the 17th century. It is rejected by P. Lambecius (1671, pp. 22-3), who states that the *gravitas* argument against Gregorian authorship is of no or of very little value; if this argument by itself would suffice to settle the authorship controversy, the authenticity of many of Gregory's genuine poems would also be suspect.

L. S. le Nain de Tillemont (1703, vol.9, p.559) mentions that there are scholars, both catholic and "heretic", who do not recognize in the *Christus patiens* the style nor the *gravitas* of Gregory; but he denies seeing any reason for attributing the play to Apollinaris.

Most of the terms in which arguments concerning stylistic aspects are stated, are reflected in the opinion of R. Ceillier (1738, vol.7, pp. 196-8), who maintains that this tragedy lacks the *nobilitas*, the *gravitas* and the *varietas* of Gregory's poetry; nor is the expression of thoughts so exact and elevated; and almost totally absent are the comparisons which occur quite frequently in Gregory's poetry.

A sharply critical opinion is expressed by L. C. Valckenaer (1768, p.xi). He denies that Gregory deserves the insult of being considered the father of such a monstrous offspring, with its numerous metrical irregularities and its disgusting lack of piquancy. Valckenaer refrained from naming any other candidate; and so did C. D. Beck (1788, p.466), who only mentioned that this tragedy was published under the name of the Nazianzen, of whom, he said, it was really unworthy.

I. A. Fabricius (1802, vol.8, p.600) expresses himself more in favour of the manuscript attribution than of scholarly conjecture, though he observes in the *Christus patiens* a lesser degree of *elegantia* and of *iudicium et acumen* than in other poems of Gregory.

Directly opposed to Valckenaer's views are those of J. C. W. Augusti (1816, pp. 10-7), who - among other arguments - asserts that differences between the *Christus patiens* and

the speeches of Gregory should be expected, because of the difference in literary genre. This argument in itself seems obvious, but it surely did not prevent H. C. A. Eichstädt (1816, pp. 21-33) from observing that the play from beginning to end is dominated by a "molestissimus ... languor", and that the diction lacks warmth and is "expers omnis succi et nervorum". (In every respect Eichstädt was echoing the opinion of Valckenaer. In fact, his contribution to the debate is nothing but a defence of the latter against the criticisms of Augusti.)

The observations of Villemain (1845, p.395) serve to place this issue in a slightly different perspective. He describes the differences between the *Christus patiens* and other poetry of Gregory Nazianzen as "evident inferiority" on the part of the former, but he considers this inferiority to be an inevitable result of the diversity of genre, and therefore not constituting a decisive argument against Gregorian authorship. (It is difficult to interpret the remark which Villemain adds: "... ajoutons qu'à tout considérer, ce drame n'est pas une production indigne de saint Grégoire." Does this indicate that he regards the "evident inferiority" as excusable in this particular case, or does it betray the fact that he uses the expression "inferiority" to appease the opponents of his views, without really regarding the play as inferior to the rest of Gregory's poetry?)

Regarding stylistic aspects of the *Christus patiens*, J. A. Lalanne (1852, pp. xxvii-xxxi) simply stated that many other poems of the Nazianzen - of undisputed authenticity - would also seem inferior to his *gravitas*, if the particular motives for their composition were not taken into account. In other words, even if the *Christus patiens* were inferior to the stylistic standards expected from a poet like Gregory, this would still be irrelevant as an objection to its origin.

Lalanne is positively in favour of the attribution to Gregory Nazianzen, whereas Ellissen (1855), who judges the arguments of Lalanne (mentioned above) as valid, has a more objective approach. He declares his intent to demonstrate, not the

authorship of Gregory, but rather the fragility of arguments generally accepted as certain proof against this authorship.

It seems that Tuilier did not carefully read Ellissen, for he states that Ellissen reproduced the text of Dübner "et les positions de la critique" (p.17), and that Ellissen did not hesitate to reveal the weaknesses in the arguments of those opposing the attribution to Gregory, "tout en refusant de croire à l'authenticité du drame" (p.17 n.4). This explains why he maintains that after the edition of Ellissen, almost nobody dared to defend the authenticity of the play.

Indeed during the second half of the 19th century different scholars did express negative views concerning the *Christus patiens*, and declared it to be of 11th or 12th century origin, without much argumentation. These views, however, were expressed in publications not primarily concerned with the play itself. This fact explains, on the one hand, the scantiness of argumentation. On the other hand, it may be an indication that the arguments against the authenticity of the play had by that time gained general acknowledgement, to an extent which discouraged further study of the subject. In fact, between 1860 and 1880 only A. Döring and J. L. Klein published studies specifically concerned with the *Christus patiens*. Döring's hypothesis, that Tzetzes is the author of the *Christus patiens*, probably contributed to the fact that many scholars were convinced of a 12th century origin.

Klein (1866, pp. 599-634) represents the opposite viewpoint, being a defender of the traditional attribution to Gregory of Nazianzus. He derives his conclusion upon the authenticity of the play from diverse arguments, among which, however, the only one possibly pertaining to style is his admiration of the poetic beauty of Mary's lament over Jesus.

A curiously flippant approach is found in I. Kont (1882, p. 444): The play is by Gregory Nazianzen, but others, of lesser ability, later interpolated some scenes; probably those which caused critics to repudiate its authenticity.



During the following decade, the dispute about the origin of the *Christus patiens* was dominated by metrical arguments, which will be discussed in the next section. This phase was followed by greater emphasis on literary and theological arguments. There were many superficial remarks, again in publications not primarily concerned with the *Christus patiens*. There were some defenders of the authenticity of the play, while many were satisfied with repeating what seems to have become the *communis opinio* by the end of the 19th century: that the *Christus patiens* was composed by an anonymous versificator of the 11th or 12th century.

In 1931, the traditional attribution of the play to Gregory Nazianzen was defended in a study by V. Cottas, mainly on the basis of theological and historical arguments. Regarding stylistic aspects, Cottas says that the objections of critics are disputable; the stylistic deficiencies and the numerous repetitions could be blamed partly to the work of copyists, partly to the anti-heretic intent of the author (pp.199-200). Later in the same study (p.209) she refers to stylistic aspects again, rejecting the idea of a contamination of different plays, on the basis of the stylistic, formal, and conceptual uniformity of the play. (It seems to me that this argument, in as far as it concerns style, contradicts the former one.)

Among the unusually large number of scholars who published reviews of Cottas' studies, roughly one third seem to have been convinced by her arguments, while the rest insisted that the play's authenticity could not be proved. Two of these, who refer explicitly to stylistic arguments, are Maas and Momigliano:

P. Maas (1932, pp. 395-6) is brusquely hostile towards the attribution of the play to Gregory, saying that all competent scholars exclude the possibility of Gregorian authorship, for stylistic and metrical reasons.

A. Momigliano (1932, pp. 47-51) sees in the era of Romanos a calculable *terminus post quem* for the *Christus patiens*,

which verifies what he regards as the stylistic and metrical indications that the play belongs to the 11th or the 12th century.

The impetus given to the dispute by Cottas soon diminished, however, and - as far as stylistic arguments especially are concerned - during the following years, nothing worth mentioning was published. At the VI<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'études Byzantines in 1948, A. Tuilier expressed his opinion that the objections against the authenticity of the play - among which those dissociating the cento from the noble personality of Gregory of Nazianzus - lacked scientific foundation. It would take two more decades, though, before these preliminary statements of Tuilier finally assumed the form in which they were published in the *introduction* to his edition of the *Christus patiens* (1969).

During this interval, the only detailed study of the play to be published was that of C. del Grande. In *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, vol.3 (1956, coll.712-3) he says that the largest obstacle to the attribution of the play to Gregory is the stylistic confrontation between the diction of the play and that of Gregory's hymns. He believes this obstacle may be overcome by supposing that interpolations to an original lyrical nucleus, which was probably the work of Gregory, have resulted in the text as we have it from Byzantine philology between the 9th and the 11th centuries. An elaboration of this view is to be found in Del Grande (1962), where lines 1656-62 are cited as a particular instance of a passage not corresponding to the "gusto" of the Nazianzen.

Q. Cataudella (1969) is in favour of the view that the play belongs to the 4th century, but does not regard Gregory of Nazianzus as the original author. He says the arguments concerning style and metre are the strongest objections against the attribution of the play to Gregory, but he does not see in them any objection against attributing it to another 4th century author. (Only one aspect of style, viz. the absence of comparisons, is explicitly mentioned by Cataudella; he simply asserts that this results from the

literary genre to which the *Christus patiens* belongs.) The hypothesis which he proposes is the following: The original author is Apollinaris of Laodicea; the parts reflecting an anti-apollinarist doctrine are the result of a revision of the play, probably by Gregory of Nazianzus.

Regarding the credibility of Cataudella's hypothesis, the following remarks may be made:

1) There is no historical evidence for the kind of revision he assumes. (This objection was mentioned to me by professor K. Mitsakis, who also pointed out that there is no evidence of the play ever being performed in Byzantine times. In fact, Mitsakis does not regard it as being intended for stage performance. Cataudella, on the other hand, supposes that the play was actually performed, and that it was so popular among the public that the orthodox theologians felt themselves compelled, either to have it destructed, or to have the text corrected in order to conform with orthodox doctrine.)

2) By the solution which he proposes, Cataudella is in fact evading the problems which the dispute involves. Instead of verifying the scientific basis of the objections against Gregorian authorship - especially the arguments relating to metre and to style - he accepts those objections without questioning, and then supposes an author of whom not enough is extant to provide a basis for judging to what extent the same objections would be applicable in his case.

The contribution of A. Tuilier (1969) is valuable not only for his edition of the text, which is based upon much more comprehensive manuscript evidence than the 1885 edition of J. G. Brambs, but also for his detailed exposition of arguments relating to the dispute about the authenticity of the play. Tuilier is a defender of the traditional attribution of the play to Gregory Nazianzen. In chapter 3 of the *introduction* to his edition, he discusses the issue of authenticity from the perspective of external criticism, dividing the arguments into those pertaining to the manuscripts - "témoignages de la tradition directe" - on the one hand, and those pertaining to interferences between *Christus patiens* and diverse authors - "témoignages de la tradition indirecte" - on the other. For

the purposes of this discussion, it may be noted that all of Tuilier's arguments can be classified as historical, and that he does not even mention stylistic arguments, except once in chapter 1, where he summarizes the development of the dispute regarding authorship of the play.

The following **conclusions** may be drawn from a survey of the stylistic arguments introduced into this dispute:

1) These arguments reveal a total lack of uniformity in the criteria which scholars apply when passing judgement on the question of the play's authenticity. While most express criticism of the poetic style of the play, some take the speeches (*orationes*) of the Nazianzen as their standard of measurement; others take the poems; and only a few allow for some Euripidean influence upon the style of the play.

2) Neither is there any consensus about the applicability of these criteria. Some scholars criticize the poet's style, without regarding it as an argument against the authenticity of the play; while others consider it to be the most valid argument, or at least among the most valid.

3) Implicit in all these arguments is the underlying notion that Gregory of Nazianzus was a poet of unrivalled talent, whose works are all masterpieces showing impeccable stylistic refinement and taste from beginning to end. This assumption obviously correlates with the widespread - though unfounded - belief that the standards set by the classical era were never equalled, let alone surpassed, by men of later ages; so that "classical" becomes equated with both "excellent" and "ancient", and "inferior" is necessarily "of post-classical origin". Though this rule may be valid for many artistic endeavours of various kinds, its uncritical application by scholars have led to many subjective opinions being accepted as statements of fact. Regarding the Nazianzen particularly: even though his works reveal undeniable poetic skills, and though his rhetorical training is put to effective use in all his writings, we should be careful not to confuse his poetic repute with his lasting renown as an expounder of orthodox doctrine, which earned him the title of "the Theologian".

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## 2.2 METRICAL ARGUMENTS:

In addition to his argument based upon the poetic style of the *Christus patiens*, Leuvenklaius (1571, p.921) stated that the rules prescribed for iambic verse are not observed in this play, whereas they are strictly adhered to in the iambic poems of the Nazianzen. This argument, also, was repeated by Perkins (1611, col. 236): "... tragoedia ... neque versum Jambicum, more Gregorii, accurate observat"; and it was echoed almost *verbatim* by W. Cave (circa 1690 - reprinted posthumously in 1741, vol.1, p.248).

The first European scholar to re-introduce this argument, was F. Buonarruoti (1716). Because of the nature of his study - it concerns archaeology - Buonarruoti only briefly refers to the *Christus patiens*. A notable aspect of his contribution, though, is that he was the first to repudiate explicitly both the attribution to Gregory and the hypothesis of Apollinarian authorship (which had been accepted by many scholars of the 17th century), and to suggest that the play was composed by a "modern author" (p.265).

Valckenaer (1768), who had neither a word of praise for the play, nor a moment's doubt about the artistic excellence of Gregory, mentioned the numerous metrical "irregularities" as one of his reasons for denying that the play could have been composed by the Nazianzen. To this argument Augusti (1816) replied that those metrical "errors", which are unacceptable in other poetry, were inevitable in a poetic mosaic like the *Christus patiens*.

For the greater part of the 19th century, references to the metre of the *Christus patiens* kept recurring, but without detailed discussion. A. B. Caillau (1840) referred to the lack of *metri rectitudo*; C. Magnin (1849) recorded among other scholarly objections against the attribution to Gregory the inexact metrical patterns of the play; A. Ellissen (1855) did not regard the metrical errors - the use of  $\alpha$ ,  $\iota$ , and  $\upsilon$  as *anceps*, and the arbitrary lengthening and shortening of syllables - as proof against the authenticity of the play.

The first detailed study of the metre of the *Christus patiens* is found in an inaugural dissertation by J. G. Brambs (1883, pp. 27-37). He states the following:

- 1) The author of the *Christus patiens* treats  $\alpha$ ,  $\iota$ , and  $\upsilon$  as *anceps*; whereas this oscillation rarely occurs in other poems of Gregory.
- 2) In the play trisyllabic feet are avoided, while these abound elsewhere in the poetry of Gregory.
- 3) Hiatus, normally admitted without restraint by Gregory, is carefully avoided in this play.
- 4) The penultimate syllable is normally accented in the play, whereas this is not the rule in Gregory.

To these arguments Brambs adds some others, of linguistic nature, in support of his view that the Nazianzen could not be the author of the *Christus patiens*. He also excludes the possibility of Apollinarian authorship (by reason of the abundance of trisyllabic feet and of hiatus), and concludes upon the authorship of either John Tzetzes or Theodorus Prodromus (both of the 12th century). Of these two, Brambs finally indicates Prodromus as the more likely author.

In reaction to this hypothesis of Brambs, I. Hilberg (1886) asserts that Theodorus Prodromus cannot be the author of the *Christus patiens*. He lists the following ten points of contrast between the play and the trimeters of Prodromus:

- 1) Iambic trimeters which are not paroxytone occur much more frequently in the play than in the poetry of Prodromus - 24 times more than in the *Love of Rhodante and Dosiclea*, while the *Catomyomachia* does not contain a single transgression of this law.
- 2) Prodromus' trimeters are all dodecasyllables, whereas the play has 8 verses consisting of 13 syllables.
- 3) The author of the play sometimes arbitrarily lengthens the short vowels  $e$  and  $o$ , while Prodromus does this only in justifiable cases, like proper names and *termini technici*.
- 4) Both Prodromus and the author of the play respected the law that  $\eta$ ,  $\omega$ , and all vowels followed by a double consonant ("starke Doppelconsonanz") are long. (Whether this is a point of contrast, the reader may judge for himself!)

- 5) Prodromus uses  $\alpha$  with iota subscript as short only twice (both cases being excusable, says Hilberg), while the author of the *Christus patiens* does so twice (with no excuse).
- 6) The first syllable of  $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\rho\acute{\omega}$  - which is long - is used as short only 4 times by Prodromus (all in the second foot), but without restraint even in the sixth foot in the play.
- 7) The first syllable of  $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omega\nu$  - also long - is used as short in lines 1667 and 1669 of the play (in the sixth foot), but never in Prodromus.
- 8) Prodromus shows more restraint than the author of the play in his treatment of short vowels before a *muta cum liquida* as *anceps* ("mittelzeitig").
- 9) Dialectal forms like  $\theta\nu\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  and  $\tau\lambda\acute{\alpha}\mu\omega\nu$  occur in the sixth foot in the play, but never in Prodromus.
- 10) The rule of *caesura semiquinaria* or *semiseptenaria* - the natural pause after the fifth or seventh syllable - is always observed by Prodromus, but not always in the play.

In order to evaluate the influence which these arguments had upon the course of the scholarly dispute, it should first be considered whether the points noted by Hilberg can serve to refute Brambs' proposal of Theodorus Prodromus as the author of *Christus patiens*. In the following paragraphs, Hilberg's statements are discussed successively:

- 1) The demonstration that Prodromus regards the paroxytone ending of a trimeter line as a rule which he observes with remarkable care: this is probably the most notable point of contrast to the *Christus patiens*, which does not reveal any awareness of such a "rule". Hilberg mentions (p.283) that among the first 500 lines of the play there are 116 which do not have a paroxytone ending. This means 23%. A random sample of lines from the rest of the play produced the figure of 22%. This differs significantly from the trimeter verse of Prodromus, for which the figures are 1% (*Love of Rhodante and Dosithea*) and zero (*Catomyomachia*).
- 2) The rule of twelve syllables: this seems to support the view of Hilberg, though 8 verses out of 2600 are a relatively small number, which cannot conceal a strong preference for

the dodecasyllable. It may be added that Hilberg's discussion of the 8 lines in question further weakens his argument. He writes: "In fünf Fällen (626, 1165, 1450, 1570, 2219) hat der Verfasser thatsächlich einen euripideischen Vers mit 13 Silben abgeschrieben und nur aus Nachlässigkeit es unterlassen, ihn entsprechend zu ändern" (p.284). If this is seen as an excuse of those "errors", it leaves Hilberg with only 3 lines - or a deviation of 0,1% - to prove his point.

3) The alleged care with which Prodrōmus avoids using a short e or o as long: Hilberg arrives at the small number of exceptions - which he regards as justified by the fact that they involve proper names or "Kunstausdrücke" - via a much larger number of emendations of lines "sämmtlich corrupt und fast durchweg leicht zu emendieren" (p.285). The author of *Christus patiens* is denied these extenuating circumstances, and the text of the play is accordingly denied the benefit of conjectural emendation. This vicious circle renders the argument inconclusive.

Note: Regarding Brambs' emendations of lines 84, 217, 725, 1203, and 1238, Hilberg says: "Wäre Theodoros Prodrōmos der Verfasser des *Christus patiens*, so würde ich die Notwendigkeit solcher Verbesserungsversuche anerkennen; dass aber jene Voraussetzung und somit auch diese Folgerung unberechtigt sind, dürfte dem Leser bereits klar geworden sein." (p.287)

4) Adherence to the rule that η, ω, and all vowels followed by a double consonant are long: by his emendation of all the exceptions to this rule - both in the play and in Prodrōmus - Hilberg deprives his own argument of a conclusion.

5) Two instances in the play, and two in Prodrōmus, of an α with iota subscript being used as short: Hilberg has already pronounced judgement upon the author of the play, has he not?

6; 7; 9) The use of a long α - resulting either from crasis, or from contraction of α-ε, or replacing η in dialectal forms like τλάμων - as short: this occurs in both authors, though never in the sixth foot in Prodrōmus - owing to Hilberg's emendation of line 225 of the *Amicitia exulans*.



8) The measure of reserve with which short vowels occurring before a *muta cum liquida* are treated as *anceps*: the difference between "some restraint" and "no restraint" in the use of a generally acknowledged licence seems somewhat too subtle to be decisive in an authorship controversy.

10) The careful observance of the rule applying to *caesurae* proves Prodromus to be technically more precise than the author of the play. This may indicate that to Prodromus form was more important, whereas the author of *Christus patiens* regarded content as more important - an oversimplification, perhaps, but not improbable, taking into account the fact that the *Catomyomachia* is a parody of the dignity of ancient tragedy, whereas the *Christus patiens* in no way can be considered a parody.

After more than a century, these weaknesses in Hilberg's arguments have not yet been exposed. K. Horna (1929) asserts that Brambs and Hilberg have decisively proved that the play belongs to the 12th century. Even Trisoglio (1974) evaluates Hilberg's article simply as "costruito con una saldezza incommensurabilmente superiore" to that of Dräseke (1884), who considered Apollinaris to be the play's author.

If Hilberg has proved anything, it is that the author of the *Christus patiens* was not one of the better 12th century iambic poets. From this can be deduced either that he was one of the less able members of that group, or that he was not a 12th century iambic poet. Hilberg concluded upon the first of these alternatives; and so, it seems, did all scholars who repeated after Krumbacher that the *Christus patiens* was composed by an anonymous author of the 11th or 12th century. The second possibility did not even occur to Hilberg, since his main concern was to refute Brambs, not to support the candidacy of any other author. Thus he built his entire argument on the supposition that the play is of late origin.

This assumption is repeated - as if it were a fact - by many scholars of the 20th century. In the following paragraphs, only those are mentioned who refer explicitly to metre:

G. Montelatici (1916, pp.137-8) asserts that the play reveals metrical correctness only in those lines taken from ancient tragedy in their totality, while the rest betray an "absolute ignorance" of prosody. He supports the view that the play was composed near the end of the 11th century.

P. Maas (1932) bluntly states that for stylistic and metrical reasons, all competent scholars oppose the attribution of the play to Gregory of Nazianzus.

According to the opinion of A. Momigliano (1932), metrical and stylistic considerations point towards an 11th or a 12th century origin of the play.

A. Vogt (1934) also does not believe that Gregory Nazianzen is the author of this play. He asserts that for prosodic and theological reasons, the *Christus patiens* is to be regarded as a work of the 7th century, possibly from Jerusalem. (?)

Concerning the metre of the *Christus patiens*, A. Tuilier (1950) points out that this play is the only known example of a cento in iambic verse. Later Byzantine literature did not experiment any further with this type of poetry. Since the change from prosodic verse to a metre based upon the stress of syllables had already occurred by the time of Romanos, Tuilier sees no reason for comparing the *Christus patiens* to the works of Theodorus Prodromus.

In sum, this survey of the metrical arguments which have been introduced into the authorship controversy leads to the following conclusions:

- 1) Though many scholars note some differences when comparing the metre of the play to that of the iambic poems of Gregory, they are divided in their opinions about the validity of such a comparison as a means of settling the authenticity dispute.
- 2) Attempts to identify an alternative author by means of metrical analysis have been unsuccessful; yet these attempts have somehow led to the assumption that the play was written in the 12th century. During recent decades, this assumption has frequently been uncritically accepted as a proven fact.

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### 2.3 LINGUISTIC ARGUMENTS:

J. G. Brambs (1883) was the first scholar to introduce into the dispute arguments of a linguistic character. He is opposed to the attribution of the play to Gregory Nazianzen, and notes the following linguistic differences between the play and other works of the Nazianzen:

- 1) In the play κάρα occurs as a feminine noun, whereas this happens once only - in a doubtful case - in Gregory.
- 2) The adverb ναί occurs frequently in the play, and is sometimes repeated; in Gregory it occurs rarely, and is never repeated.
- 3) The comparative in stead of the superlative form occurs frequently in the play, but it is alien to Gregory.
- 4) The verbs μολῶ, ἐρῶ, and θίγω are conjugated irregularly in the play, though not in Gregory.
- 5) The use of the aorist conjunctive in future sense occurs in the play, but is very rare in Gregory.
- 6) Aorist infinitives occur in the play in future sense, though Gregory follows classical usage in this respect.
- 7) The aorist optative is used for future indicative or for optative with ἔν in the play, much more frequently than is usual for Gregory.
- 8) The perfect is used for the aorist, "contrary to the rules", in the play but not in Gregory.
- 9) The verb κέκραγα has present as well as past value.
- 10) The form ἔφησε - alien to Gregory - occurs in the play.

The only other contribution containing linguistic arguments is that of T. Mommsen (1895) who says that the play contains a number of features indicating its late origin, for example the semitic instrumental ἐν (but cf. Euripides *Bacchae* 159), the frequent occurrence of composites with παν-, and certain "monsters" like λαμπροπυρσόμορφος.

Except for these two contributions, no research has been done on the language of the *Christus patiens* and its relation to the linguistic usage of the Nazianzen. The question whether linguistic features of the play do or do not support the attribution to Gregory, is still far from being answered.

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## 2.4 LITERARY ARGUMENTS:

Much more scholarly attention has been given to the literary aspects of the play than to its language. The first of these to be introduced into the debate involved characterization. As early as 1588, Baronius voiced his criticism of the *animi affectus* of the *Deipara* expressed in this tragedy. Similar criticism of the poet's characterization of Mary is contained in a remark by Bellarminus (1613): "... describitur eiulatus matris Christi, quae prudentissima et constantissima erat."

It seems that Bellarminus judged the characterization of the Virgin from a theological perspective, expecting of the dramatist to remain faithful to the gospels in his portrayal of Mary, to an extent which allows no concession to the demands of a dramatic plot. The same is true of R. Ceillier (1738), who disapproves of the doubts, fear, and anger expressed by the Virgin during the course of the play, which, he says, do not agree with her portrayal by the church fathers as a very steadfast person.

Proof of this tendency among some scholars to apply strictly theological criteria in the evaluation of an aspect which clearly also involves literary considerations, may be seen in the article by C. Magnin (1849). When listing the objections of earlier scholars against the attribution of the play to Gregory, he includes among the theological objections those criticisms expressed against the characterization of the Virgin. Under the heading of literary objections he listed arguments concerning language, style, and metre.

Some other literary aspects were introduced into the debate by D. Triller (1748). In order to support his assertion that the play was written by an ignorant monk, Triller lists the following defects in the play's construction:

- duration of three days, against the classical convention;
- the excessive use of messenger speeches;
- the absence of choral odes.

He also objects to the insufficient characterization of the different roles, to the monotony of the discourses, and to

the poor style of the play. It is clear that the criteria by which Triller evaluates the play are not theological, like those of Bellarminus and Ceillier; instead, he measures by all the standards of ancient tragedy, and arrives at the verdict that in many respects the *Christus patiens* falls short of those norms.

The opposite view is expressed by J. Iriarte (1769), who defends the literary merits of the play, and sees no reason for it to be described as a *tragicomoedia*. He sees nothing "humile" or "sordidum" or "ridiculum" in the play, and finds in it all the requirements of true tragedy.

The fact that the *Christus patiens* is a cento of Euripidean verse, also led to divergent scholarly opinions about its literary merits. In reaction to Valckenaer, who regards the play as an infantile literary production, Augusti (1816) sees behind the author's explicit reference to his poetic source a conscious reason for composing a cento. According to Augusti, it was the poet's purpose to introduce not himself, but another, to speak; and by mentioning his source, he was not committing plagiarism. The views of Augusti, in their turn, were vigorously opposed by Eichstädt (1816), who repeated the literary objections of Triller. To these he added some others, like the so-called comic character of Mary, the verbosity of her speeches, and the "indecenty" of her laments over her son.

J. A. Lalanne (1852) admits that the laments of the Virgin are somewhat exaggerated, but he asserts that no tragic character exists without exaggeration. Thus he defends the attribution to Gregory by excusing the amount of exaggeration which some parts of the play exhibit. Implicit in this type of reasoning is the assumption that it is not characteristic of Gregory to exaggerate. One needs only to read some of his encomia, though, to realize that objections to exaggeration in the play can never be made into a cogent argument against Gregorian authorship.

In fact, Lalanne himself is of the opinion that the character

of the Virgin constitutes an argument in favour of Gregorian authorship. Her passionate temperament, her sensitivity to grief, as well as the way in which strength of purpose and human doubt are intermingled in her character, are all seen by him as manifestations of the personality of the Nazianzen.

A. Ellissen (1855) differs from those scholars who regard the characters in the play as not sufficiently individualized. He admits that the absence of choral odes may constitute a defect in its composition, though only if it is warranted to expect that the play should conform to all the norms applying to classical tragedy.

Whereas Ellissen has a positive appreciation of the poetic merits of the *Christus patiens*, A. Döring (1864) is of the opinion that the play has no such merits at all.

J. L. Klein (1866) agrees with Lalanne in regarding the character of the Virgin as a projection of the passionate, impulsive, fragile, but very noble temperament of the Nazianzen. In this respect, he sees the stamp of Gregory unmistakably impressed upon the play.

(Because of the centonic nature of this play, one should be careful not to ascribe to Gregory - or to the author, who ever he may be - every detail of characterization. It should be remembered that many traits of the characters may inevitably be taken over from Euripides along with the lines of verse. On the other hand, the poet may have chosen particular lines from Euripides primarily because they expressed the traits with which he planned to invest one of his characters.)

Klein detects in the three messages received by the Virgin a crescendo of importance and interest, which is paralleled by a dramatic crescendo in her reactions to them. He also says that the purification of humanity which is dramatized in this play leads to a *catharsis* the extent of which Aristotle could never have foreseen.

A. Nauck (1876) describes the play simply as "drama illud insulsum quod in libris Gregorio Nazianzeno male tribuitur" -

"that tasteless play which is wrongly attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus in the manuscripts".

Regarding characterization, K. N. Sathas (1878) observes that the Virgin is presented in the play more like Hecuba than like the Mother of God "who bemoans in a christian manner the crucifixion of Christ".

Note: With this argument Sathas seems to ignore, firstly, the centonic nature of the play; secondly, the possible influence which the demands of dramatic presentation may have exerted upon the laments which the dramatist wrote for the Virgin; and thirdly, the fact that in *Oratio* 15 (PG 35, 928 B ff.) the Nazianzen uses a similar technique in his portrayal of the mother of the Maccabees.

Objections against the "pagan nature" of the laments of the Virgin were voiced also by A. d'Ancona (1891), who regards the play as an example of intellectual and poetic decadence.

Without ignoring the artificiality of the method of composition, E. A. Pullig (1893) regards the verses borrowed from Euripides as fulfilling the purpose outlined in the introductory verses, and therefore not reflecting negatively upon the author.

Though M. de la Rousselière (1895) considers Gregory of Antioch - rather than the Nazianzen - to be the author of the *Christus patiens*, he evaluates the literary merits of the play in almost the same way as Pullig. He says the author can not be accused of plagiarism, because he takes only small phrases from Euripides; no situations, costumes, characters, or ideas.

Note: In my opinion, the author's greatest achievement is precisely his imitation and successful adaptation of many more elements of ancient tragedy than de la Rousselière would admit.

According to de la Rousselière, the characterization of the virgin reveals the poet's profound theological insight and fine analytical abilities.

K. Dieterich (1902) states that the *Christus patiens* is not truly a play, since it consists largely of messenger speeches and laments. He observes that Mary does not reveal the characteristics of a Mother of God; neither is she properly conceived as a literary character, since she exhibits some individual traits of the most divergent male and female characters of ancient tragedy; and in her oscillation between desperation and faith, the first gains the upper hand every time. Thus, according to Dieterich, the play is not inspired by any artistic or religious sensibility; the rage with which Mary repeatedly explodes against the enemies and the traitor of her son, is unfit for a christian; and the only scene reflecting a true christian spirit, is the one in which Peter is pardoned. He sees the character of Mary as a reflection of the spirit prevailing in the Byzantium of the 11th or 12th century - a spirit lacking the victorious power of faith and consequently also lacking the joy of life and of artistic expression.

These observations of Dieterich reveal the same type of reasoning as do the comments made by scholars like Sathas and d'Ancona. They reflect a tendency to compare the *Christus patiens* to classical tragedy, or to non-dramatic christian literature, or to both simultaneously, and to regard any deficiencies which such a comparison may seem to reveal, as proof that Gregory Nazianzen could not be the author of the *Christus patiens*. Underlying this type of reasoning is the assumption that everything the Nazianzen ever produced was impeccable, both from a literary and a religious perspective. This assumption, however, is unwarranted, and the comparison is an unfair one. Since the *Christus patiens* is the only known play by its author - whether or not he be the Nazianzen - it is unrealistic to expect from it the same standards of dramatic art than from the known plays of Euripides, which after all constitute a small selection from the vast literary production of this famous poet. Furthermore, it is reasonable to expect that the characters in this play would reveal some traits which, being inspired by Euripidean characters, can not be traced back to the gospels or to patristic sources.



A. Baumgartner (1905) agrees neither with the severe criticism of Dieterich, nor with the extremely laudative remarks of Klein. His own views about the play are the following:

- 1) The author was attracted by the religious seriousness, the fascinating rhetoric, the moving pathos, as well as the rich and beautiful language of Euripides; but he has not really penetrated the theory and practice of dramaturgy.
- 2) Contemplating the tragedy of the crucifixion and death of Christ, he was convinced that the laments of the virgin mother surpassed those of Hecuba in their measure both of grief and of love, but the only model from which he could shape into drama the great tragic argument of the history of mankind, was the simple narrative account of the evangelists.
- 3) The construction of the play is ingenuous and simple, but not inept, for it reveals a fine understanding of dramatic situation, a moving pathos, and theatrical effect in details.
- 4) The play has poetic beauty, and it remains an important event in the history of christian drama.

G. Montelatici (1916) denies the authenticity of the play, and dates it at about the end of the 11th century. He says a more exact indication is impossible, due to the lack of other works of the same genre, and to the conservative character of its language. He notes that the play does not follow the classical pattern, since it introduces too many characters, it lacks unity of time and locality, and there do not exist internal divisions like in classical tragedy.

Another opponent of the attribution of the *Christus patiens* to Gregory of Nazianzus, is F. Ermini (1916). His opinion is based upon the characterization of the virgin, to which he expresses objections similar to those recorded by Baronius, Bellarminus, Ceillier, Eichstädt, Sathas, d'Ancona, and Dieterich.

Q. Cataudella (1931) regards it as evidence of an exceptional artistic intuition that the poet immersed the divine mystery of the passion of Christ in a human concreteness of feeling, without totally humanizing it. He notes that in the first

part of the play the Virgin projects a contrast between grief and hope. This he regards as the psychological reality which the poet has recognized in her, as the human offprint of the divine mystery.

When this view of Cataudella is compared to the opinions of some of the scholars mentioned previously, it becomes clear that Cataudella praises precisely those literary aspects of the play which others severely criticise. This indicates once more the total lack of consensus among scholars about valid criteria for judging both the play's literary merits and the issue of its authenticity.

Concerning the characterization of the virgin mother in this play, V. Cottas (1931) states that it reflects the poet's intention to portray her as truly the Mother of God, though not superhuman. According to Cottas, the poet was placing emphasis upon the difference between the divine nature of Christ and the human nature of his mother, in order to illustrate the truth of the Incarnation. Another point which concerns the literary value of the *Christus patiens*, viz. the idea that it resulted from the contamination of several plays, is rejected by Cottas on the basis of the stylistic, formal, and conceptual unity which she observes in the play.

R. Cantarella (1948) says that the figure of the Virgin is drawn with profound humanity, and that the poet has at times infused her with accents of true poetry, though he frequently did not avoid the pitfalls of verbosity.

The old and widespread tendency among scholars to judge the characterization of the Virgin from a purely theological viewpoint, is still prevalent in some recent publications. Thus N. Vernieri (circa 1950) deprecates the profanation of the Virgin by language which recalls the figures of Hecuba and Medea.

A different approach is seen in the study of J. M. Szymusiak (1965), who regards the laments of the Virgin as coherently reflecting the psychological state of the mother who mourns for her son, and therefore not as theologically unacceptable.

Szymusiak points out that most patristic authors - unlike later theologians - referred to the Virgin only casually in their studies on Christ, tending to emphasize her humanity, and ignore the more complicated questions of mariology; and that the representation of Mary in the manner of suffering mothers from ancient tragedy may be seen as fitting well into this pattern.

Cataudella (1969) regards the excessive humanity with which Mary is portrayed as possibly the result of a deliberate attempt to emphasize by contrast the divine aspect of Christ.

A. Tuilier (1969) also admits that Mary's doubts and her expressions of grief seem excessive to the modern reader, but points out that it belongs to the Cappadocian tradition as represented by St. Basil and by Amphilochius of Iconium. He adds that the parallels with Medea and Agave seem to indicate that the poet resolves on both the tragic and the religious levels those mythical contradictions which in Euripides find no solution. This, he says, presupposes a profound knowledge of the classics on the part of the author, whom he believes to be the Nazianzen.

The findings of this survey of literary arguments which have been introduced into the dispute concerning the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*, may be summarized as follows:

- 1) The characterization of Mary by the author is discussed more frequently than any other literary aspect of the play.
- 2) Those scholars who object to this characterization, mainly for theological reasons, mostly regard their own objections as proof against the authenticity of the play. However, there are some who do not regard this aspect of the play as a valid argument for settling the authorship dispute.
- 3) Those scholars in favour of accepting the attribution of the play to Gregory, make it their task to provide acceptable reasons for the way in which the Virgin is portrayed by him.
- 4) Also regarding other literary aspects of the play, much difference of opinion exists; neither do scholars agree about the value of these for settling the authorship dispute.

\* \* \*

## 2.5 HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS:

Regarding the manuscript tradition of the *Christus patiens*, I. Leuvenklaius (1571) notes that the title preserved in the manuscript which he used, differs from that which is current in other manuscripts of the works of Gregory. Whereas the usual form reads Γρηγορίου τοῦ θεολόγου, or Τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ θεολόγου, the title of the manuscript *Parisinus* 1220 reads Τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γρηγορίου τοῦ θεολόγου ὑπόθεσις δραματικῆ κατ' Εὐριπίδην περιέχουσα τὴν δι' ἡμᾶς γενομένην σάρκωσιν τοῦ σωτήρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ κοσμοσωτήριον πάθος. To Leuvenklaius, this seemed to have originated from a more recent editor, who hoped to ascribe to Gregory this imitation of Euripidean verse, which, according to Leuvenklaius, corresponds neither to the tragic poet, nor to Gregory of Nazianzus.

Though a supporter of the attribution of the play to Gregory, D. Heinsius (1643) is cautioned by his own observation that the *Suda* does not mention this work by name, while assigning to Gregory 30000 lines of poetry. To this P. Lambeck (1671) replies that, in fact, a certain manuscript of the *Suda* does mention τὸ κατ' Εὐριπίδην καὶ περὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθῶν δράμα, which is omitted in printed editions of that source.

R. Ceillier (1738) did not attach much value to the testimony of this single manuscript, and added that the *Suda* did not have strong authority, because of its being written more than 500 years after the time of Gregory. Ceillier thought that the play could be attributed to a certain Gregory, who became bishop of Antioch in 572, and that this author has later been confused with the Nazianzen. He based this hypothesis upon a passage of Evagrius Scholasticus, which he interpreted as meaning "Gregory, famous for his poetic ability". However, this text could also mean "Gregory whose fame is great, to use poetic terms" - cf. J. Dräseke (1884).

(Note: The quotation is from *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5.6, and reads: Γρηγορίου οὗ κλέος εὐρὺ κατὰ τὴν ποίησιν.)

In fact, although this Gregory was famous in his time, there is no evidence that he was a great poet.

A. B. Caillau (1840) also seems to regard as important the argument that only a relatively young manuscript of the *Suda* includes the play among the works of the Nazianzen. He adds that most of the ancient manuscripts of the play itself do not contain the author's name.

A historical argument of a totally different kind is that of L. C. Valckenaer (1768), who is strongly opposed to the traditional attribution of the play, and asserts that among the poems of Gregory, there is nothing composed of the verses of others, and that only in the *De virtute* (line 328) does the Nazianzen copy an iambic line of Euripides.

Valckenaer's argument is rejected as indecisive by C. Magnin (1849), who notes that this strange kind of composition was practised also by Proba, and was tolerated by Tertullian, while being criticized by Jerome. Accordingly, says Magnin, Jerome would obviously not mention the *Christus patiens* among the works of the Nazianzen.

(When critically examined, these opposing views reveal the inconclusiveness inherent in many arguments regarding the authenticity of the play. Valckenaer's is, strictly speaking, an *argumentum e silentio*, and should be weighed against the unanimity of the explicit indications in favour of Gregorian authorship of the play. The flimsy basis on which Magnin's refutation is built, rather tends to lend some undeserved credibility to an argument like that of Valckenaer.)

Accepting Voltaire's theory, that religious plays originated at Constantinople, Th. Warton (2nd ed. 1870) asserts that Gregory banned the pagan *spectacula* from the theatre of the capital, and introduced plots taken from the Old and the New Testaments. Of these, he maintains, the *Christus patiens* is the only surviving play. (Since Warton's premise is unproven, his argument does not seem to have much value.)

J. C. W. Augusti (1816) formulates some reasons which the Nazianzen may have had for composing this play: it could be to "cover the nudity of the Saviour in the clothing of classical poetry", or to demonstrate that even the pagans involuntarily sang "the hymn of the Word" and that the Greek dramatists were "instruments of the Word and of the Holy Spirit". These motives - Augusti asserts - are not unworthy of one who by his zeal has earned himself the title of "the Theologian". Augusti was also the first scholar to mention the historical circumstances prevailing under the reign of Julian the Apostate, as probably leading to the composition of a work like the *Christus patiens*.

The views of Augusti are opposed by H.C.A. Eichstädt (1816), who considers the silence of so many authors to be a stronger argument than the unanimous testimony of all the codices - which are, admittedly, quite young.

F. Dübner (1846) attributes to Tzetzes the epilogue (lines 2605-10) which has been preserved in one of the codices. His reasons are (a) the pun on the name of Lycophron, (b) the term *λῆποι* referring to myths, which occurs in line 2606 as well as quite often in Tzetzes' commentary on the *Cassandra* of Lycophron, and (c) the identity between line 2610 of the *Christus patiens* and line 1 of the *Cassandra*. From this epilogue Dübner infers that Tzetzes has read the play without knowing who the author was. This he regards as evidence that the attribution to Gregory must be a later development.

A. Döring (1864) agrees with Dübner in attributing to Tzetzes the epilogue (lines 2605-10) which is preserved in one of the manuscripts. However, Döring goes further, and attributes to Tzetzes the entire play.

J. A. Lalanne (1852) sees a historical argument in favour of Gregorian authorship in the exigency of presenting Christian themes in the style of the classical authors. This was an urgent need in the late 4th century, during the persecution under Julian. Lalanne also regards as significant the fact that until late in the 16th century, the voices attributing

the play to Gregory were unanimous.

Lalanne's views concerning the historical circumstances of the 4th century are shared by J. L. Klein (1866), who adds that the invectives of the virgin mother against Judas are parallel to those of Gregory against Julian.

As far as historical arguments regarding the question of the play's authenticity are concerned, a new perspective was opened by A. Kirchoff (1853). He held that the author was a monk who had limited knowledge of the plays of Euripides. This belief he based upon the observation that the *Christus patiens* contained quotations from only those seven plays of Euripides which were preserved in later (mediaeval) times.

In this field, particularly, scholarly progress has been very slow. The following figures may show how an image of the full scale to which the author has made use of Euripidean material has only gradually been built up:

Valckenaer (1768) was aware of 197 lines taken from Euripides – from *Hippolytus*, *Troades*, *Medea*, *Rhesus*, and the *Bacchae*;

Porson identified two more plays from which verses were taken, viz. *Hecuba* (4 lines) and *Orestes* (7 lines);

the Benedictines (1840) knew of 606 verses, all from the seven plays mentioned above;

Döring (1864) reached a total of 1125 Euripidean verses, taken from these same seven plays;

and in addition to these, Tuilier (1969) has identified some verses taken also from the *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Helen*, both *Iphigenia* plays, and the *Phoenissae*.

Note: The importance of Tuilier's contribution in this respect lies in the identification of more plays from which extracts have been made, rather than in the identification of more lines from the plays already known to have been used.

Döring (1864) states that since there is a notable number of passages in the *Christus patiens* which either support the better readings of Euripides manuscripts against the weaker ones, or preserve readings which differ from all manuscripts, it is plausible that the author may have had before him a text which differs considerably from all extant manuscripts.

K. N. Sathas (1878) mentions - as an argument against the attribution of the *Christus patiens* to Gregory - that none of the scholiasts affirms his authorship of this play.

J. G. Brambs (1883) does not consider the testimony of *Parisinus* 2875 to be of much value, because this codex is mutilated at the beginning. Brambs supposes that the name of the author may have been imagined by a later scribe.

After 1883, nearly half a century elapsed before historical arguments were again introduced into the debate, this time by a supporter of the traditional attribution of the play. It was V. Cottas (1931), who asserted that in the 9th century, George of Nicomedia wrote a commentary on the three parts of the play, confirming its originality and naming the author as "the Theologian". (Cf. PG 100, 1457 ff.; 1489 ff.)

Cottas interprets a passage in *Oratio* 22 (PG 35, 1140) - where κωμωδία is contrasted to τραγωδία - as an allusion of Gregory himself to the play. (This interpretation is rightly rejected in a review by Q. Cataudella (1932), as well as by la Piana (1936).)

After comparing the *kontakion* "On Mary at the Cross" of Romanos to a parallel passage in the *Christus patiens*, Cottas infers the anteriority of the play from the force with which the play communicates a dogma which, in Romanos, has the security of something established long since. Regarding the *kontakion* "On the Resurrection", she mentions the following arguments in favour of the authenticity of the play:

- 1) the citation by Romanos of "the Theologian" as his source;
- 2) confusion between the episodes of the resurrection, which occurs in Romanos, but not in the play.

Finally, she asserts that Gregory has been imitated also by John Chrysostom, by Epiphanius of Cyprus, by Germanus of Constantinople (7th century), by Simon Metaphrastes (10th century), by the monk Epiphanius (11th century), as well as by George of Nicomedia, especially in presenting Mary as the first to see the resurrected Jesus.

In her dissertation which was also published in 1931, Cottas declared that all literary works of the oriental Church



concerning the Passion of Christ, as well as all innovations in the iconography concerned with this cycle, were based upon the *Christus patiens*.

(This sweeping assertion is probably the main reason why many scholars rejected her defence of the play's authenticity with so much contempt.)

In a review of Cottas' publications, L. Bréhier (1932) states that the parallels between the *Christus patiens* and the *De Virgine iuxta crucem* of Romanos prove only that the unknown author of the play was inspired by the melodist. He admits that the affinities between the play and George of Nicomedia may prove the anteriority of the play, although both may, alternatively, be supposed to derive from a common source.

Whereas Q. Cataudella (1932) agrees with Cottas in seeing an influence from the *Christus patiens* upon Romanos, P. Maas (1932) regards Romanos as the imitated, not the imitator.

A. Momigliano (1932) asserts that Romanos is definitely the earlier of the two. In support of this view he argues that the play amplifies the material present in Romanos. By the term "Theologian", he says, Romanos refers to the Evangelist.

A. Vogt (1934) supposes that the attribution to Gregory may have resulted from later confusion of the biographer, Gregory the Presbyter, with the Nazianzen himself. Vogt also mentions another possibility, *viz.* that the play may have been written at Jerusalem, in the 7th century, in order to defend Orthodox doctrine against Judaistic monotheism.

R. Cantarella (1948) regards Cottas' arguments in favour of the attribution to Gregory as not being totally convincing. However, he does not see in Momigliano's *terminus post quem* any decisive proof against the possible authenticity of the play, since in this case, like in many similar ones, one of the *termini* is uncertain. Regarding the approximate date of the *Christus patiens*, he says that the only plausible time of composition - with the exception of the 4th century - is after the 10th century, when the great editions of Aeschylus,

Sophocles, and Aristophanes give evidence of renewed interest in dramatic poetry. Cantarella adds that the whole question will have to be reconsidered, (a) if the "commentary" by George of Nicomedia really refers to the *Christus patiens* and is authentic, and (b) if the author of the play did make use of tragic works which did not survive the Middle Ages.

(Like Cantarella, Q. Cataudella (1969) also does not consider the parallels with Romanos to provide decisive proof against or in favour of the play's authenticity - but *cf.* chapter 8.)

In the first of his contributions to the dispute regarding the date and authorship of the *Christus patiens*, A. Tuilier (1948) indicates his intention to determine the historical era in which the composition of such a cento would be most likely. He cites the testimonies of Irenaeus and Tertullian regarding the creation of centos, as well as the examples of Ausonius, Proba, and Pomponius. He asserts that by the end of the 4th century, this art was so widely diffused that it was alluded to by St. Jerome and St. Augustine; and that by the middle of the 5th century it was represented by the empress Eudoxia.

Tuilier (1968) asserts that this play fits exactly into the apologetic perspective of christians in the second half of the fourth century, adding that it is the expression of an epoch in which the classical tradition was still alive. He cites evidence that apart from Euripides *Bacchae*, *Hecuba*, *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, and *Orestes*, from which numerous lines are used, the author also knew the *Andromache*, *Heracles*, and *Phoenissae*, as well as the *Rhesus* and *Troades*.

J. M. Szymusiak (1965) believes that even if the authorship of Gregory cannot be proved, the play belongs to the same epoch as his life and activity.

Q. Cataudella (1969), who also believes that the play belongs to the fourth century, if not to the Nazianzen, points at the notice of Sozomenus, *viz.* that Apollinaris wrote christian tragedies on the pattern of Euripides, in reaction to the

edict of Julian. To Cataudella, the extensive knowledge of Euripides manifested by the author indicates an era in which the interest for Euripides was still alive (the 4th century) or in which it was resurrected (the 12th century). He sees an argument in favour of the 4th century date in the passage of centonic character occurring at lines 585-596 of *De virtute*, a work of undisputed authenticity.

J. Grosdidier de Matons (1967) is convinced that the author of *Christus patiens* is dependant upon Romanos, because only the first strophe of "On Mary at the Cross" - the part which was repeatedly used in church services - seems to have been known to the author of the play. He also believes that "the Theologian" to whom Romanos refers in the third strophe of the first hymn "On the Resurrection", is John the Evangelist; not the Nazianzen, as Cottas has asserted.

In the introduction of his edition of the *Christus patiens*, A. Tuilier (1969) mentions the following historical arguments in favour of the attribution of the play to Gregory:

1) All manuscripts are unanimous in indicating the Nazianzen as the author of the play. Although *Parisinus gr.* 2875 lacks the title, the introduction and the first 108 lines, a later copy of it, *viz. Monacensis gr.* 154, witnesses to the earlier existence of the *incipit* containing the name of Gregory.

2) The text of the *Christus patiens* corresponds with the ancient tradition of the text of Euripides, as opposed to the mediaeval. As far as the *Bacchae* is concerned, it contains elements which were lost in mediaeval manuscripts; thus it establishes a distinction between documents prior to the 6th century and those pertaining to the 6th or later centuries.

3) The *kontakion* "On Mary at the Cross" of Romanos has a dramatic character which probably reveals influence from the play. Furthermore, the melodists had a habit of harmonizing hymns which were anterior to them - taken from the Nazianzen and from Chrysostom especially; Romanos seems to allude to the introduction of the play (*cf. τραχομένη* - line 27); the

*kontakion* contains some particularities of tragic style; and Romanos refers to the presence of Mary Magdalene at the tomb on the morning of the Passover, following the account of the "Theologian", whereas he always refers to the Evangelist by the name John.

4) Regarding the relations of this play to mediaeval poets: there is no relation to John of Damascus; those with John Mauropus (11th century) demonstrate the anteriority of the play; the parallels which Brambs believes to observe between the play and Theodorus Prodromus are inconclusive, because of the literary and linguistic differences between them.

5) The silence of biographical sources about the play and its author is not a valid argument against its authenticity, since Byzantine information on the Nazianzen is generally quite scanty. In this respect, the following may be noted:

a) The *Suda* follows the testimony of Philostorgius and that of Jerome, who contains inexact information and obscurities which reveals him to be poorly informed about the literary and theological activities of the Nazianzen.

b) Gregory the Presbyter mentions that the Nazianzen wrote poetry of all kinds, in order to neutralize the effects of the edict of Julian - an unjustified claim, if the *Christus patiens* is excluded from his poetry. Furthermore, the same biographer mentions that the Nazianzen particularly imitated the language of the theatre, using the term ὑπόθεσις, which occurs in the title of the play, as attested by the best manuscript tradition.

c) Although Sozomenus (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5.18) states that Apollinaris composed tragedies on the Euripidean pattern to counteract the edict of Julian, the *Christus patiens* could not have been written by him, because of theological reasons.

d) The *Catalogus librorum ecclesiasticorum* of the Nestorian Ebedjesu contains a note concerning a *liber tragediae* among the works of the Nazianzen which were translated into Syrian.

This testimony must relate to a very old source, since these translations must have been made before the year 500.

Furthermore, the term *liber tragediae* explicitly reveals that the tragedy (originally) constituted a separate volume. This confirms the authenticity of the play, by indicating that it is anterior to the generalization of the codex. It also explains how the play could be isolated from the rest of Gregory's works during the Middle Ages. Finally, the length of the play - approximately 2600 lines - is equal to that of a *volumen* containing the gospel of Matthew or Luke, which makes it quite plausible that the term *liber tragediae* may refer to the *Christus patiens*.

(The term *liber* occurs also in the title of this catalogue; thus, if the catalogue contains works which are posterior to the generalization of the codex, the particular significance which Tuilier attaches to this term seems unwarranted.)

#### **Conclusion:**

This survey of the arguments of historical nature which have been advanced during the course of the dispute regarding the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*, reveals that no solid conclusions can be drawn from the historical data available on this issue. The basic problem remains to consider which one of different possibilities seems the most probable. The scanty biographical information on the author, for instance, offers no decisive proof either of the play's authenticity or of its late origin. Every argument against its authenticity, like the fact that only one manuscript of the *Suda* mentions it among the works of Gregory, has to be considered in the light of a related argument in favour of its authenticity, like the *Suda's* reference to 30000 lines of poetry written by Gregory, which is nearer to the truth if the *Christus patiens* is included in this corpus.

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## 2.6 THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS:

In the vast literature concerning the *Christus patiens* and the question of its authenticity, the first remark which may be classified under the heading of theological arguments, is that of I. Casaubon (1614). He asserts that blood and water flowed from the side of Jesus, separately, even though the author of the *Christus patiens* seems to affirm the opposite in the phrase *πεφυρμένον ποτόν* (line 1082). Casaubon notes, however, that a few lines later (1104) the author mentions *αἷμα τ' οὐ πεφυρμένον*. From this he concludes upon an error of textual transmission in line 1082.

The conjecture which he proposed - *κοῦ πεφυρμένον ποτόν* - is accepted by F. Combéfis, who believes that the author would not depart so far from Scripture and sound doctrine, or from *decorum*, as to speak of a *πεφυρμένον ποτόν* flowing from the side of Jesus. Though the notes of Combéfis have been lost, and we know his comments on the play only from the citations by Caillau (1840), his opinion about the identity of the play's author may be deduced from his arguments concerning line 1082. Instead of simply consenting to Casaubon's quite reasonable contextual argument for emendation, and accepting the reading *κοῦ πεφυρμένον*, he adds the doctrinal argument mentioned above. This reveals his belief that the author is Gregory of Nazianzus; for if he did not consider the play to be authentic, he would not have attached significance to this doctrinal argument.

F. Buonarruoti (1716) quotes the *Christus patiens* as one of the ancient sources mentioning the use of three, rather than four, nails at the crucifixion - though he adds that the play does not have great authority, since it was composed neither by Gregory of Nazianzus, nor by Appolinaris the elder, but by a "modern author".

R. Ceillier (1738) argues that the emotions of doubt, fear, and anger exhibited by the protagonist of the play contradict the portrayal of the Virgin by the church fathers; and the reference to her consecration to the Temple, and miraculous

feeding by an angel, shows apocryphal influence; consequently he does not accept the attribution of the play to Gregory. He adds that, by supposing the erection of churches and the institution of festivals in honour of the Virgin in his own time, the author reveals that he was writing no earlier than the second half of the fifth century; for it was only after the Council of Ephesus (in 431), at which the title θεοτόκος was officially recognized, that the construction of churches in her honour in Constantinople and elsewhere could commence.

On the basis of this latter argument, Ceillier also excludes the possibility of Apollinarian authorship, adding that the play underlines the distinction between the two natures of Christ, which was denied by Apollinaris of Laodicea. Another argument of theological character which Ceillier mentions, is the appearance of Jesus to the Virgin directly after the resurrection. This, says Ceillier, has no parallel in the gospels, and the first to advance this idea was Sedulius, whose *Paschale Opus* was written about the middle of the 5th century.

With reference to lines 103-104 of the *Christus patiens*, L.C. Valckenaer (1768) asserts that the Nazianzen would never address to the most holy Virgin the same terms as Venus uses of herself in the *Hippolytus* - "numquam Gregorius Nazianzenus Mariam dixisset οὐκ ἀνώουμον Ἀρνήν". (This argument seems to be built on Valckenaer's own view of *decorum*, rather than on doctrinal considerations.)

The play is described by J. C. W. Augusti (1816) as a source for precise knowledge of the Christian doctrines, though not significant in terms of aesthetical value. Thus this defender of the play's authenticity draws a clear distinction between literary and theological arguments regarding the play.

A. B. Caillau (1840) records the following objections against attributing the play to Gregory of Nazianzus:

- lines 272 ff: The Virgin becomes excessively angry and uses insulting language when addressing the enemies of her son.

- lines 439 ff: The Virgin cannot accept the fact that her Son has to die.

- lines 469 ff: She is filled with fear which is unworthy of the holy Virgin, who is portrayed by Ambrose (*De institutione Virginis*, 7) as "fugientibus viris stabat intrepida"; and she loses herself in laments and in tears, though Ambrose says of her: "stantem lego; flentem non lego" (*De obitu Valentiniani*, p. 1185).

- lines 965-6: The construction of many churches, as well as the celebration of solemn festivals, in honour of the Virgin, seems an anachronism before the Council of Ephesus in 431.

- lines 1349 ff: The references to the feeding of the Virgin by the hands of angels, and her being entrusted to the care of a pious man, give evidence of apocryphal influence on the play, being derived from the *De ortu Beatae Virginis*.

- lines 2095 ff: According to these lines, Christ appears to the virgin Mary directly after the resurrection.

Caillau also does not accept the suggested attribution of the play to Apollinaris, because of its insistence that Mary is the mother of the Diphysite - μήτηρ τοῦ Διφυσοῦς (line 1795). He adds that the *De ortu Beatae Virginis* is later than the time of Apollinaris; therefore the *Christus patiens* must also belong to a later era.

Note: Caillau cannot be blamed for being misinformed about the date of origin of the *De ortu Beatae Virginis*; but the publication, in 1958, of a papyrus containing the Greek text of this document, and dating from the third century, is the final proof that the influence from this source is an invalid argument for rejecting a fourth century date for the play.

To the objections of the Maurinists, viz. that the numerous titles of honour occurring at lines 2572 ff., and especially the reference to the corporeal assumption of the Virgin; seem more natural for the age of John of Damascus, Caillau replies that many prayers of Ephrem contain more numerous and more splendid titles than the passage concerned, and that even the



doctrine of the Assumption can be traced to earlier sources.

The arguments of scholars who are opposed to the attribution of the play to Gregory are recorded also by C. Magnin (1849). Among the theological arguments, he records criticism of the sudden and profound changes in the characterization of the Virgin, "who falls from the divine model of resignation which appears in the canonical books, and in the writings of the fathers, into violent paroxysms of human grief". Magnin also mentions the objections against traditions originating from apocryphal sources, and against some anachronistic titles of honour and forms of veneration.

Being a defender of the attribution of the play - or, at the least, of the play in its earliest form - to the Nazianzen, Magnin replies to the latter of these objections by asserting that the veneration of Mary was notably developed before 431.

J. L. Klein (1866) defends the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*, while asserting that the play exhibits theological concepts identical to those of the Nazianzen, especially as far as soteriology is concerned. However, the scene in which the Virgin is comforted by St. John he regards as interpolated because "the canonical cult of the Mother of God was not sanctioned before the Council of Ephesus in 431" (p. 618).

Arguments of a theological nature recurred in the article of J. Dräseke (1884), who is in favour of the attribution of the *Christus patiens* to Apollinaris of Laodicea. He regards the notion that the prayer to the Virgin (at the end of the play) belongs to the era of John of Damascus, as being unfounded. He points to evidence in the works of Gregory, of an intense devotion to the Virgin, of which, he says, Apollinaris was one of the greatest representatives. (This seems to me to be a textbook example of a circular argument.)

In his "étude littéraire" of the play, M. de la Rousselière (1895) asserts that the poet's characterization of Jesus and of the Virgin reveals profound theological insight, and fine analytical ability. In the next chapter, "aperçus historique et critique", he defends the legitimacy and correctness of

the sentiments manifested by the Virgin, both from a literary and a theological point of view.

A remark which K. Dieterich (1902) made, in the context of an extremely negative literary evaluation of the play, may serve to illustrate the confusion existing in the reasoning of many scholars, between theological and literary arguments concerning the play. Dieterich says the *Christus patiens* is not a play in the proper sense, since it consists mainly of messenger speeches and laments; Mary, he says, does not have the substance of a Mother of God; neither is she a character properly conceived from a literary point of view, since she combines the traits of the most divergent - masculine as well as feminine - characters of ancient tragedy; she oscillates between faith and desperation, proving that the play is not inspired by any artistic or religious sensibility.

The question whether or not the Virgin in this play reveals traits characteristic of the Mother of God, is a theological-historical issue. Its implications for the authenticity of the play can only be illustrated by asking: What were the characteristics attributed to the holy Virgin by the orthodox church in the fourth century? Were these traits associated with the title "Mother of God", and to what extent are they reflected in the *Christus patiens*? The answer to all these questions is strictly irrelevant to the question whether she is characterized according to acceptable literary practice. Since Dieterich does not distinguish between the different kinds of arguments, he almost inevitably confuses the play's literary merits - or lack of it - with the question regarding its origin as seen from a theological perspective.

O. Weinreich (1929) finds the description of the resurrection of Christ in verses taken from the *Bacchae* quite acceptable, explaining that the parallel between Christ and Dionysus has already been drawn by Celsus. The intention of this argument of Weinreich is hard to follow. If he means that borrowing from the *Bacchae* is theologically acceptable, we should reply that an orthodox christian author would hardly have followed the example of Celsus; if, however, he means that it is

acceptable from a literary point of view, the implication seems to be that even a poet like the Nazianzen could have used these bacchic verses to describe the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. Weinreich further complicates the matter when saying that he regards the play as a product of the 12th century. What point is there, then, in commenting on the acceptability of borrowing from the *Bacchae*?

V. Cottas (1931) observes that the term θεοτόκος occurs only in the *didascalia*, and nowhere in the text itself. Thus she argues that its presence in the *Christus patiens* is not an anachronism constituting an argument against the allocation of the play to the 4th century. (With this argument of Cottas Q. Cataudella (1932) explicitly agrees.)

The following theological arguments in favour of attributing the play to Gregory, are also expounded by Cottas:

- 1) The play is connected to the anti-apollinarist polemic of the letter to Cleodnius, and to the defence of the Trinity.
- 2) The laments of the Virgin are intended to prove that she is truly the mother of God, though not superhuman.
- 3) The proclamation of Jesus regarding the intercession of the Virgin for humanity is theologically significant.
- 4) The prologue belongs to an era in which the problem of the Incarnation concerned all Christians: the era of arianism and apollinarism.
- 5) The laments of the Virgin are meant to illustrate that the Word has really descended upon the earth.
- 6) Cottas asserts that the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus is definitely later than the *Christus patiens*.

In her dissertation on the influence of the *Christus patiens* upon oriental christian art (1931), Cottas asserts that the Virgin of the play is the μήτηρ θεοῦ of the 4th century, and not yet the Παναγία. She adds that Gregory's main reason for presenting a dialogue between the Virgin and her son while he is on the cross but still alive, was to create an opportunity for Christ to explain that he dies voluntarily. In this, says Cottas, the Nazianzen was followed by Romanos the Melodist as well as George of Nicomedia.

In his review of the publications of Cottas, Q. Cataudella (1932) says that at the time when Christianity was involved in the debate concerning the Incarnation, the doctrines of the real suffering of the Virgin and the death of Christ had much more actuality than it had during the iconoclastic era or in the 11th and 12th centuries.

A. Vogt (1934) considers the play to be the product of an era in which mariology was already quite fully developed, adding that all the epithets referring to the θεοτόκος in the play belong to the vocabulary of the 7th century.

According to A. Tuilier (1948), the doubts of some scholars concerning the orthodoxy of the sentiments of the Virgin do not constitute objective and well-founded arguments against the play's authenticity. Regarding the title θεοτόκος Tuilier says that its absence from the text constitutes an argument in favour of the 4th century, because it would not have been omitted from a mediaeval work. (The same argument is found in J. M. Szymusiak (1965), who regards the absence of this title from mediaeval Byzantine works as "unthinkable", while being "logical" in the case of works of the 4th century, that is, earlier than the Council of Ephesus.) Tuilier excludes the possibility of Apollinarian authorship of the play, by reason of the affirmation of two natures in Christ - cf. the phrase μήτερον τοῦ διφυοῦς in line 1795.

Although C. del Grande (1962) believes that the *Christus patiens* is a product of the 4th century, he says that some affirmations of the θεολόγος in the play are incongruous with the thoughts of the Nazianzen. This is one of his arguments for opposing the attribution of the play to Gregory.

J. M. Szymusiak (1965), however, is in favour of attributing the play to the Nazianzen. He stresses the difference between the Fathers and later theologians in their presentation of the problems of mariology: The Fathers, he says, occasionally referred to the Virgin in their studies on Christ, normally emphasizing her humanity, as is demonstrated by some passages from Athanasius and Basil.

Since the title θεοτόκος does not occur in the text of the play, says Q. Cataudella (1969<sup>1</sup>), there are no obstacles to allocating it to the 4th century. He accepts, however, the validity of diverse arguments against the attribution of the play to Gregory. In his book, which was published that same year (Cataudella, 1969<sup>2</sup>, pp. 449-50), he lists the following arguments against the authorship of Gregory:

- The use of an apocryphal source (the Gospel of Nicodemus).
- References to churches erected in honour of the Virgin and to a cult directed to her (which was possible only after the Council of Ephesus in 431).
- The doctrine of remission of sins through the intercession of the Virgin.
- The attributes θεοτόκος and παντάνασσα, which do not seem compatible with the pre-Ephesine period.

In reply to these arguments, Cataudella asserts that nothing would have prevented a 4th century poet from referring to an apocryphal document not suspected of heterodoxy; that the references to a cult of the Virgin may be understood as only expressing a desire, or could be a later addition; that the title θεοτόκος occurs in the *didascalia*, not in the text; and that the attribute παντάνασσα could be understood in a sense which is not unconceivable for the 4th century ("pantanassa va probabilmente letto pant'anassa" - p.451). Thus Cataudella dismisses - either by excising from the text, or by sweeping from the table - all arguments of theological nature against the allocation of this play to the 4th century. His belief that the author, nonetheless, cannot be Gregory of Nazianzus, is based mainly upon stylistic and metrical arguments.

(Perhaps the treatment of the issue by Cataudella reveals the desperation which has resulted from four centuries of bitter dispute, among scholars, regarding the origin of the *Christus patiens* - a dispute which has hampered rather than promoted the study of this play, and which has given to it a notoriety far exceeding any literary merits it may have.)

As far as theological arguments are concerned, Tuilier (1969)

contributes the following:

1) The author expresses his apologetical intentions near the end of the prologue; this defense of the redeeming Passion is also his reason for including in the play a dialogue between Pilate, the priests, and the guard - in order to demonstrate the historical reality of the resurrection of Christ, against the false *Acta Pilati*, which was circulated by Maximian Daia to support the anti-christian polemic.

2) By stressing the κένωσις of the Word in the Incarnation, the play reveals its connection with the anti-apollinarist polemics of Gregory. These heretics denied the κένωσις, and believed that the Λόγος was substituted for the soul of the human person in Christ; the *Christus patiens*, however, is strictly diphysite, for it mentions the human soul of Christ (lines 886-7), and makes Mary the protagonist, demonstrating that she is the mother of the God-Man, and that Christ has fully assumed human nature.

3) This explains why Gregory, later in his life, insisted so strongly on the divine maternity. Through his influence, the term θεοτόκος became part of the theological vocabulary, for it bears witness to the part which the Virgin played in the Incarnation and Redemption. Before Gregory, no Father of the Church has studied the person of Mary in itself. Even if for metrical reasons, the title θεοτόκος does not appear in the text of the *Christus patiens*, Mary has full knowledge of her mission, and participates voluntarily in the sacrifice of her Son.

#### **Conclusion:**

Of all the different arguments which scholars have introduced into the dispute regarding the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*, theological arguments seem to have caused the most confusion. This seems to be due mainly to the lack of a clear definition of what may readily be associated with an orthodox theologian and poet of the 4th century.

\* \* \*

## 2.7 CONTRIBUTIONS SINCE 1969:

The profusion of review articles discussing Tuilier's edition of the *Christus patiens* is evidence of the impact which this publication had upon the academic world. However, the picture emerging from a survey of these reviews, reveals little more than the recurrence of the same arguments which have for four centuries been feeding the dispute about the authenticity or inauthenticity of this play:

P.-M. Bogaert (1970) accepts Tuilier's arguments about the text of Euripides, about the use made of the *Christus patiens* by Romanos and by other (mediaeval) poets, and about both the literary character and the doctrinal intention of the play as pertaining to the era and the person of the Cappadocian. He regards Tuilier's volume as scientific in its approach, and since he accepts the 4th century date, he sees no obstacles to accepting also the authorship of Gregory of Nazianzus.

E. Boularand (1970) voices his admiration of the "courageous and masterly fashion" in which Tuilier treats the problem of authenticity in its totality. He considers as decisive the agreement of the text with readings anterior to the mediaeval textual tradition of Euripides; he accepts the authorship of Gregory of Nazianzus as probable on the basis of biographical testimony; regards as inconclusive the objections based upon the silence of our sources concerning the author of the play; regards as significant the *Suda's* attribution to Gregory, of 30000 lines of poetry; and he does not disregard the argument of Gregory's familiarity with classical culture. The totality of these arguments - according to Boularand - is what renders the authorship of Gregory "more than probable".

After first summarizing Tuilier's arguments in favour of the attribution of the *Christus patiens* to Gregory of Nazianzus, P. Courcelle (1969) remarks that the gravest objection to the notion of Gregorian authorship of the play is that no-one, of ancient times, gives testimony to this effect. To Tuilier's assertion that the play's authenticity is "incontestable", he replies: "Je crains, pour ma part, qu'une contre-offensive

ne se dessine un jour; car ce poème peut très bien être d'un humaniste orthodoxe du IV<sup>e</sup> ou du V<sup>e</sup> siècle (qui s'appelait peut-être même Grégoire) et avoir été attribué fort tôt au Grégoire le plus illustre de ce temps." The first part of this remark would be proved true, as the following paragraphs will indicate; but the last part - that the play may very well be the work of a 4th or a 5th century humanist, who was probably also called Gregory - contradicts what Courcelle regards as the "gravest objection" against the attribution of the play to Gregory. How can one believe that the author, who lived in the 4th or 5th century, was probably called Gregory, and that this then led to the attribution of the play to the famous Gregory of Nazianzus, while at the same time objecting to this attribution of the play to the Nazianzen, mainly for the reason that the author was never identified as Gregory in ancient times?

To J. Darrouzès (1970), Tuilier's strongest argument seems to be the one based upon his comparison of the text with the textual tradition of Euripides' plays. However, he asserts that the solution to the problem of authenticity may lie in establishing whether the poet utilizes Euripides in the same way in his other works, and whether there exists any decisive concordance between the composition of the *Christus patiens* and the literary practices of Gregory. (To my mind, this is demanding a comparison of incomparables, since the *Christus patiens* is explicitly introduced as a play according to the pattern of Euripides - cf. the discussion of this aspect in chapter 1.)

Darrouzès further criticizes Tuilier for not facilitating the study of what he regards as the most important aspect - the mariology of this poem - due to the lack of a thematic index of terms. Accepting that the art of the cento may be proper to the 4th century, Darrouzès considers the mariology of the *Christus patiens* to be incompatible to that era.

J. A. de Aldama (1970) recognizes the impressiveness of the totality of Tuilier's arguments. However, he asserts that a prerequisite to demonstrating with certainty Tuilier's thesis



is a study of the theology, and particularly the mariology of the *Christus patiens*. His objections to Gregorian authorship are (a) the emphasis on the divine maternity and the virgin birth, (b) the affirmation of a corporeal assumption of Mary, of the redemptive death of Christ for Mary (which he infers from line 2567, while admitting that this interpretation is questionable), and (c) the doctrine of her intercession and mediation of grace. To De Aldama these themes, as well as the attention to the psychology of the Virgin - to the extent of making her the central figure in the tragedy - would present something very new for the 4th century - "qualcosa di troppo nuovo per il IV secolo".

Note: De Aldama's review is the only one that is mentioned in the supplemented 1978 edition of Altaner-Stuiber's *Patrologie* - together with the comment: "nicht von Gregor".

E. A. de Mendieta (1969) describes Tuilier's exposition of the problem of attribution to Gregory of Nazianzus, as both clear and unbiased ("aussi lucide qu'impartiale"). However, he states that none of the arguments which Tuilier draws from the direct or indirect traditions of this cento of Euripides is plainly convincing, and that - even when taken together - these arguments do not exclude dissenting views. He adds that every one of the arguments which Tuilier develops in defence of his hypothesis - even the one relating to the well-known *kontakion* of Romanos on the weeping of Mary - is susceptible to a different interpretation. "Chacun des arguments peut servir de fait à appuyer la thèse dite critique, celle qui voit dans ce centon une oeuvre médio-byzantine, probablement du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle." (p.598)

It seems, though, that de Mendieta has not carefully followed Tuilier's arguments, for he writes: "M. A. Tuilier s'efforce de démontrer successivement les points suivantes. Tout d'abord, la tragédie sur la Passion du Christ est très vraisemblablement une oeuvre apologétique du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, et elle est destinée à illustrer les mystères chrétiens au moment de la réaction païenne de l'empereur Julien. Il affirme ensuite qu'on peut rattacher le *Christus patiens* aux dernières décennies du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle et au combat dogmatique

pour la réalité diphysite de l'Homme-Dieu. Plus loin, il formule sa thèse d'après laquelle l'attribution à Grégoire de Nazianze de ce drame-centon euripidien est 'incontestable à tous points de vue' (p.72)." The arguments opposed by de Mendieta are those pertaining to internal criticism, which - though necessarily following from the arguments pertaining to external criticism - Tuilier explicitly defines as being subordinate in significance. (Cf. p.27 of his introduction.)

With regard to the age of the extant manuscripts, de Mendieta remarks that, whereas the majority of the authentic works of Gregory of Nazianzus are attested in manuscripts of the 9th and 10th centuries, the most ancient manuscript containing this Euripidean cento belongs to the second half of the 13th century. This, says De Mendieta, is something to think about: "C'est là un fait qui donne à réfléchir."

(One should add, however, that the most ancient of the extant manuscripts of Euripides date from the 12th century; and that proves nothing for the dating of any Euripidean play.)

R. Henry (1969) says the publication of Tuilier's edition is justified on two counts: It is the first critical edition of the text since 1886, and it contains the first translation in French ever to be published.

Note: Henry seems to be unaware of the French translations by Lalanne, Douhet, and de la Rousselière - cf. chapter 1.

The *introduction*, Henry says, offers the reader an entirely new examination of the problem of attribution to Gregory - entirely new because, in spite of all the discussion which it has caused since the 16th century, this problem of the play's authenticity has never before been clearly expounded in all its aspects. Henry regards Tuilier's treatment of the problem as an objective examination of the case; he adds that he is quite certain that any reader in good faith could only find Tuilier's argumentation convincing.

As "indices de l'ancienneté de la pièce" Henry considers the allusions to the trinitarian heresies of the 4th century, and the textual parallels which demonstrate the anteriority of this play in relation to the recension B of the *Acta Pilati*.

W. Hörandner (1971) is of the opinion that Tuilier's arguments in their totality do not justify his thesis. The knowledge of certain passages from antique drama could also pertain to the 12th century, he says; the passage agreeing to Romanos was adapted from Romanos to the requirements of metre; there is not sufficient evidence to regard Ebedjesu's *liber tragoediae* as the *Christus patiens*. Hörandner laments the fact that Tuilier shuns decisive questions like those pertaining to the metre, which he regards as the principal argument for a later dating, since the strict adherence to the 12-syllable line unequivocally points to the medio-byzantine period, as does the regularity of the end of the line. He deplores also the absence of a linguistic index, saying that an exact analysis of the linguistic patrimony, especially of the structure of all neo-formations and of the theological terminology, would contribute decisively to solving the problem of the time of composition, and possibly also that of the author.

H. Hunger (1971) rejects all Tuilier's arguments in favour of Gregorian authorship, though he admits that centos are mainly known from the 4th and 5th centuries, and that Sozomenus once mentioned that Apollinaris of Laodicea was an imitator of Euripides. Although Hunger agrees with Tuilier regarding the extensive knowledge of antique authors on the part of Gregory of Nazianzus (p.127), he does not consider the assignation of Gregory by the manuscripts as significant, because the first one hundred lines have been lost from the most ancient extant manuscript: "Wir wissen also nicht, wie die erste Seite des Archetypus ausgesehen hat!" He does not say a word, though, about Tuilier's arguments concerning *Cod. Monacensis gr. 154*.

Concerning the edition of the text by Tuilier, Hunger says in a note (p. 127 n. 1): "Erst während der Drucklegung dieser Besprechung wurde mir die neue Ausgabe ... von Tuilier ... zugänglich. Mich konnten auch die in der ausführlichen Einleitung angeführten Argumente von einer Autorschaft des Gregor von Nazianz nicht überzeugen."

A.-M. Malingrey (1971) - like de Mendieta - is troubled by the fact that the manuscripts of the *Christus patiens* belong

to a relatively recent era, when compared to the abundance of 10th and 11th century manuscripts containing the works of the Church Fathers. However, among the arguments which he finds "possible to appreciate", Malingrey mentions the attribution of the *Christus patiens* to Gregory of Nazianzus by one of the earliest witnesses, the manuscript *Parisinus gr.* 2875, as well as by *Neapolitanus Borbonicus* II A 25 (14th century) and *Vaticanus gr.* 481, dated at 1438; also the contribution made by the *Christus patiens* to the restoration of the text of certain Euripidean passages. To this he remarks: "Ce serait un argument pour faire remonter le centon avant la fin de l'antiquité, en tout cas avant l'époque byzantine proprement dite." (p.253) Another argument which he finds credible, is Tuilier's interpretation of the biographical note by Gregory the Presbyter (cf. Tuilier, p.56). He adds that - contrary to the opinion of certain critics of the Renaissance - it seems to him that the art of the cento was not unworthy of the fine man of letters who was Gregory of Nazianzus. (p.254)

About the historical situation to which Tuilier relates the *Christus patiens*, Malingrey remarks that the expression by which the play is designated in some of the manuscripts, and which occurs also in the *explicit* of *Matritensis* 4649, viz. ὑπόθεσις δραματική, seems to suggest that one should envisage this work as an apologetical demonstration in the form of an antique play. This, he says, is also how Tuilier interprets it in his *introduction*, at p. 57.

Malingrey praises Tuilier's edition as "une bonne édition critique". He adds:

Sur cette question particulièrement épineuse, il aligne un ensemble d'arguments qui permettent de concevoir comme vraisemblable l'attribution traditionnelle. Désormais on souhaiterait que les adversaires de l'authenticité fournissent des preuves positives en faveur de leur thèse.

He concludes by mentioning that much research still has to be done before the matter will be settled - e.g. a comparison of the mariology and christology of the *Christus patiens*, first to the works of the Nazianzen, secondly to the canons of the

councils of the 4th and 5th centuries; also the compilation of an exhaustive index of its vocabulary, as a prerequisite to studying the evolution of the words in their usage by Euripides and by the author of the *Christus patiens*, and then comparing this usage to the way Gregory of Nazianzus employs the same words.

In the light of his own definition of a cento - "La technique de centon consiste à assembler des citations plus ou moins fidèles, vers, fractions de vers ou simples formules, avec plus ou moins de liberté ou de fantaisie" - J. Mossay (1971) states that the borrowings from the text of Euripides are so free as not to appear artificial; but the general structure of the play is evidently conventional, and it pertains to ancient aesthetics, which have become totally outdated by the time of Gregory of Nazianzus, and - *a fortiori* - at any more recent date. Nonetheless, the play has some literary appeal: "l'oeuvre garde néanmoins son charme littéraire".

About Tuilier's defence of the authenticity of this cento, Mossay says that it will not leave indifferent even those who still reject the idea of Gregorian authorship.

The review of T. Špidlík (1970) consists mainly of quotations from Tuilier's *introduction* - perhaps not an indication of thorough study on his part. However, he states that Tuilier convinces his readers, by means of an erudite demonstration ranging from the history of the Greek manuscripts to that of the Byzantine literature and the mediaeval mystery plays, that the work should be attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus. He repeats Tuilier's arguments that all manuscripts recognize the Nazianzen as the author, that the citations in Byzantine authors confirm the anteriority of the *Christus patiens*, and that the doctrinal perspective of our text, which places it within the anti-apollinarist polemic, lends support to its attribution to the Nazianzen.

D. A. Sykes (1970) is cautiously ambivalent in his verdict: Clearly M. Tuilier is right in suggesting that not all who have pronounced the work spurious have

justified their right to do so. But equally it should be remembered that objective criteria have been put forward for examination. Krumbacher, for instance, based some of his doubts on grammar and prosody. M. Tuilier scarcely discusses either. ... there is sufficient body of original writing to make appropriate a direct comparison with the grammatical usage and metre of Gregory's trimeter verse.

Sykes accepts Tuilier's evidence suggesting that the text of Euripides used by the author antedates the standard mediaeval texts; also, it seems, the arguments that a *Christus patiens* written by Gregory would (probably) be imitated by Byzantine writers like Romanos, and that the theology of the poem is consistent with a Cappadocian position in Christology. "But neither here nor in his article has M. Tuilier succeeded in making the absence from the text of the word *θεοτόκος* into any cohesive argument for authorship."

Sykes concludes: "There may be some who will be unable to find quite the degree of literary artistry which M. Tuilier claims (pp. 73 *f.*) but who will still recognize the importance of the work and the value of this contribution to its understanding."

A. Wankenne (1970) accepts Tuilier's view that the *Christus patiens* has to be attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus:

M. A. Tuilier ne se contente pas de démontrer qu'il faut l'attribuer au saint docteur. Il rétablit sa réputation. D'abord, si elle est pleine de citations du théâtre d'Euripide, c'est parce que Julien l'Apostat avait défendu aux chrétiens l'enseignement des lettres païennes. Sous cette forme, empruntée pour une grande part, une théologie profonde s'exprime, celle de la réalité de la nature humaine en Jesus-Christ, celle par conséquent de la "Theotokos", de Marie mère de Dieu, dont le rôle est capital dans l'histoire du salut.

Referring to a remark of Gustave Cohen - "l'authenticité du drame était certaine si Grégoire citait couramment Euripide dans le reste de son oeuvre" - OR, the author of an anonymous review published in *Irenikon* 44 (1971) 130, leaves open the question whether Tuilier has succeeded in reestablishing the attribution of the play to Gregory of Nazianzus.

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In a study titled *La tragedia "Christus patiens" y la doctrina mariana en la Capadocia del siglo IV*, J.A. de Aldama (1972) aims at comparing the conceptual world of the *Christus patiens* with that of Gregory of Nazianzus and his cultural environment. De Aldama expresses the opinion that from this perspective, the association of the play with mediaeval byzantine literature seems definitive. He recognizes the difficulties caused by the diversity in literary genre, but affirms the originality of the Mary figure, which possesses a degree of moderation in suffering foreign to Euripides.

His verdicts concerning the Mary figure are:

- 1) The prime position which Mary has in the play, does not correspond to 4th century Cappadocia, in which the veneration of Mary was closely united with, and subordinate to, that of the Saviour. (p. 418)
- 2) The titles currently referring to Mary in the text of the play express her regality, and differ from the normal image of the Mother of God in 4th century Cappadocia. (p. 418)
- 3) The *Christus patiens* places extraordinary emphasis on the virginal birth, which seems foreign to Gregory of Nazianzus. (pp. 418-9)
- 4) According to St. Basil and to Amphilochius of Iconium, the sword which Simeon prophesied for Mary was doubt and scandal, whereas in the tragedy it is intense grief - which, however, is mitigated by a faith which brings hope and fortitude. (pp. 419-21)

5) The final supplication seems to affirm a corporeal assumption of Mary - a doctrine which is alien to 4th century Cappadocia. (pp. 421-2)

To de Aldama, all of this points to the same conclusion: if the tragedy has Gregory of Nazianzus as its author, it stands isolated from the rest of the ecclesiastical literature concerning Mary - without any immediate precedents or any traceable influence. Concerning Romanos, he finds it improbable that the latter would be inspired by only a few passages from the *Christus patiens*, while many more would prove to be ultimately useful to him; therefore he regards the hypothesis of Grosdidier de Matons, viz. that the composer of the tragedy knew only this fragment from Romanos, as plausible.

The opinion of F. Trisoglio (1974) regarding this issue is nowhere plainly apparent, except in his final paragraph:

Era destino che S. Gregorio di Nazianzo - la personalità piú affascinante ed enigmatica di tutta la patristica greca, l'uomo dalle folgoranti vittorie e dalle ritirate periodiche, l'anima piú burrascosa e piú tersa della Chiesa orientale - continuasse ad inquietare anche i posteri in rudi contrasti. La sua figura storica fu la piú ricca di fascino dei primi secoli bizantini ed è un fascino che pare riverberarsi sull'opera contrastatamente attribuitagli: in mezzo a tanta scatenata passione sembrano emergere i lineamenti della Sfinge.

\* \* \*



## 2.8 GENERAL CONCLUSION:

The foregoing review of the opinions of scholars regarding the *Christus patiens* has revealed much speculation and very little proof - either of Gregorian authorship of the play, or of its inauthenticity. It also revealed, I would suspect, a tendency of this issue to become more complicated the more it is debated. Since the first shadow of doubt has been cast on the traditional attribution of the play to the famous Gregory of Nazianzus, the number and diversity of arguments defending or opposing this attribution, has steadily been increasing.

Tuilier's *introduction*, taken at face value, is perhaps the best argument of authorship produced thus far. It is at least tempting in that one may regard the matter as settled, and go about reading the play itself, on the assumption of Gregorian authorship - or, at least, of a 4th century date. However, the interpretation of this work, like the interpretation of any literary work of art, could prove hazardous if its proper historical setting were either disregarded or - even worse - if the interpretation were attempted on the basis of false assumptions about its historical setting. A proper study of the issue, as undertaken and expounded in the previous pages, led to the conclusion that both the *Christus patiens* and the question of its (in)authenticity warrant further research - provided that it is independent and objective research, aimed at resolving rather than complicating the questions regarding the origin, intention, and literary value of this cento.

The following chapters describe the methods, findings, and conclusions of such research, as undertaken by the present author. These are submitted to the reader, together with the wish that the study of the *Christus patiens* may be to him, or her, the same gratifying experience as it has been to me.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHAPTER 3

### THE NEED OF OBJECTIVE CRITERIA

The *Christus patiens* seems to have more in common with the *Rhesus* than the two hundred and fifty-odd lines of verse which have been identified as being borrowed, in part or in their totality, from that play. In the *introduction* to his edition of the text of the *Rhesus*, W. H. Porter (1916) wrote:

The *Rhesus* has perhaps excited a greater difference of opinion among those who have discussed its literary value and significance than any other extant Greek play. This has happened mainly because critics have not approached it with an open mind. Their real interest has lain in the question whether the *Rhesus* is to be regarded as a genuine work of Euripides. This question, first raised by certain ancient critics, has been debated, not infrequently with some asperity, by every generation of scholars from the days of Scaliger. It is significant that those who deny the authenticity of the play generally proceed to denounce it as a feeble and mediocre production, while almost every upholder of its Euripidean title has adjudged it a meritorious work not unworthy of its author.

Almost word by word, this description of the scholarly debate surrounding the *Rhesus* is applicable also to the *Christus patiens* and the question whether it is to be regarded as a work of Gregory of Nazianzus. However, it seems that the *Rhesus* has been treated better than the *Christus patiens*, for Porter could add: "Of late the protagonists on either side have approached the problem with more diffidence ... Hence it has become less difficult for the student, in dealing with the interpretation and literary significance of the play, to keep his judgment unbiased by the problem of authorship, and to reserve the latter for independent examination." Three quarters of a century have elapsed since these words were written, but the position has remained basically unaltered as far as the *Christus patiens* is concerned.

The most momentous event to be recorded during this period, was the publication of a critical edition of the text, with introduction, French translation, notes, and indexes, by André Tuilier (1969). The greatest value of Tuilier's edition lies in the access which it provides to the text itself, as it is printed in a clear and readable font, and complemented by auxiliary material facilitating research of the relations between the play and its thematic as well as poetic sources. The French translation, though inviting criticism at various points, is a welcome addition in an age when the knowledge of Latin is not as common among students as it used to be.

Note: The Latin prose translation accompanying the Greek text as printed in Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, vol. 38, is quite uninspiring; and to the verse translation of Roillet the words of Caillau (concerning the metrical translation of Gregory's *carmina* by Billius) equally apply: "... opus istud plus ipsi difficultatis quam lectoribus utilitatis attulit."

In his *introduction*, Tuilier presents an eloquent defence of the authenticity of the *Christus patiens*. The distinction between internal and external evidence regarding the question of authorship is perhaps his main claim to scientific status. He explicitly indicates (p. 27) that he regards the arguments of **internal criticism** as **subordinate** to the evidence which he classifies as pertaining to **external criticism**, *viz.* (1) the direct testimony of the manuscripts; (2) indirect evidence, such as (a) correspondence of the text to variant readings in the textual tradition of Euripides, (b) evidence gained from parallels between the play and diverse byzantine authors, and (c) biographical testimony.

That scholars reviewing his edition paid little attention to this basic distinction, is not Tuilier's fault; but it has resulted in mounting confusion rather than clarity about the issue of the play's authenticity. In roughly one third of the reviews of his edition, the authorship of Gregory is rejected categorically; the same number of scholars accept it without much hesitation; and the rest prefer to remain neutral. (*Cf.* the previous chapter, section 2.7.) Notably, none of these scholars explicitly accept, or reject, Tuilier's distinction between internal and external evidence. Yet those who reject

his defence of the play's authenticity, almost exclusively call upon arguments of internal criticism to support their position.

Furthermore, if the distinction between internal and external evidence were respected, the issue would still not have been solved immediately; for the arguments pertaining to external criticism as defined by Tuilier, rest upon the interpretation of evidence which is not self-explanatory. Indeed the reviews contain some examples of evidence interpreted in a way which contradicts the interpretation by Tuilier. Consequently, it is not surprising that the latter, for all his eloquence, did not convince everybody that the play belong to Gregory.

One major pitfall which Tuilier has not successfully avoided, though, is the confusion of the play's (in)authenticity with its literary significance. In his defence of the attribution of the play to Gregory of Nazianzus, he repeatedly likens it to classical tragedy - cf. such expressions as "la tragédie chrétienne par excellence", "l'auteur utilise les thèmes et la mise en scène du théâtre grec", "la pièce reproduit tous les aspects scéniques du drame antique" (p.19), "le drame est une trilogie ... trois épisodes successifs ... maintiennent l'unité de la tragédie chrétienne dans la tradition biblique et dans la tradition classique" (p.20). Indeed, the play does exhibit many parallels to the classical theatre; but Tuilier surely invites criticism and dissent when asserting (p.70):

(L')auteur montre à cet égard une singulière connaissance du théâtre antique pour le fond et pour la forme. C'est pourquoi cet auteur est certainement Grégoire de Nazianze qui lisait les poètes antiques, et qui cite à maintes reprises Euripide dans ses oeuvres les plus authentiques.

With this remark, Tuilier seems to ignore his own distinction between internal and external criticism, and his premise that the arguments of internal criticism are subordinate to - and accordingly can only lend support to - the evidence belonging to external criticism; but worse still, he confuses his own literary appreciation of the *Christus patiens* with the issue

of the play's authenticity or inauthenticity. The quotation concerning the *Rhesus* at the beginning of the chapter, seems to apply equally well, at this point, to Tuilier's discussion of the *Christus patiens*.

The following example may indicate how widespread and firmly established this confusion is in the tradition of scholarly debate concerning this play: In 1769, J. Iriarte defended the *Christus patiens* against the (derogatory ?) designation *Tragicomoedia*:

Quid enim, si Christianum spectatorem consulas, aut rebus, aut personis, aut verbis admixtum habet humile, quid sordidum, quid ridiculum? Imo quid eius argumento grandius, augustius, coelestius, divinius? Quot et quanta *Christus patiens* in hominum animis concitet παθήματα? Quid denique ad veram Tragoediam pertinens, praecipitur, quod in eo desideres? (pp. 368-9)

F. Trisoglio (1974) regards this as an obvious indication that Iriarte was one of the defenders of the authenticity of the play - "come tale si inserisce ovviamente tra i fautori della paternità gregoriana". If this equation of authenticity with literary merits (measured by the standards of classical tragedy) is valid, then the arguments of those who deny both the authenticity and the literary significance of the play, on the assumption that the one necessarily implies the other, are also valid. Then the whole issue remains subject to the dictates of personal preference, and the dispute may continue interminably.

To penetrate to the roots of the problem, however, we should consider whether the play had to conform to all the standards applying to classical tragedy, as if that were its only claim to literary significance. Does the fact that it imitates the dramatic poetry of Euripides, imply that it must necessarily reflect every aspect of that poetry? Does the fact that it contains no choral lyrics, or transgresses the Aristotelian requirements regarding time and locality, or lacks dramatic tension, mean that it cannot be regarded as good poetry? Is this not to deny its centonic (i.e. eclectic) character?

Consider the following example of an evaluation of the play, based entirely on subjective opinion:

Wir empfinden die Ausstattung der heiligen Personen mit den übel zugerichteten Lappen der attischen Bühne als eine wüste Profanierung. Das mumienhaft erstarrte Gewand der alten Tragödie passt den auf einem ganz anderen Boden erwachsenen Gestalten nicht; ihre Bewegungen erscheinen darin ungereimt, und wir haben beim Anblick der so bunt aufgeputzten Figuren mehr mit der Heiterkeit als mit den Thränen zu kämpfen. ... Mit dem bekannten Εἶθ' ὤφελ' tritt die Gottesmutter als Maria Medea auf die Bühne; in schnellster Folge wechselt sie ihr Kostüm, sie wird zur Hekabe, Cassandra, Klytämestra, Andromache, sogar zum Hermes; dieselbe Chamäleonnatur haben alle andere Personen.

In this description by Krumbacher - pp. 746-747 - it seems that the play is denounced for being what its author intended it to be - a cento of Euripidean verse. But opinions may have changed since 1897; consider, thus, a more recent evaluation, by Trypanis (1981, p.490):

Its author ... uses numerous lines, half-lines and formulae from Classical and Hellenistic plays. Most of this material is Euripidean ... All this should not be judged in the light of a modern view of plagiarism. It is typical, 'praiseworthy' Byzantine imitation of the classics, which dominates much highbrow Byzantine writing.

Certainly, 'praiseworthy' (*sic*) does not mean praiseworthy!

What connection is there between this remark and the question of the play's (in)authenticity? Nothing - except that it is preceded by a paragraph telling the reader that the *Christus patiens* "has been traditionally but wrongly attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus. In actual fact, it is an uninspiring cento of the eleventh or twelfth century by an unknown author". The reader would readily believe this, especially in the light of an earlier paragraph (p.411): "It is natural

(and not unusual) that to great names of the past lesser works should be attributed; such is the case with the *Christus patiens*, the drama on the Passion of Christ which was believed to be a work by Gregory but has been proved to be a second-rate Euripidean cento of the eleventh or twelfth century."

"Second-rate", "uninspiring", "wrongly attributed to Gregory" - it seems that remarkably little has changed during the last century.

\* \* \*

The question may arise whether, at this stage, anything new can still be said about the *Christus patiens* and the question of its authenticity. In the following chapters, some aspects of the play are discussed which have received very little, if any, attention from critics. The conclusions given at the end of each chapter, it is trusted, are the logical result of the evidence examined, and duly verified. But before proceeding to the discussion of these aspects, the **suppositions** of the present author regarding these issues have to be explicitly defined:

1) The literary significance of the *Christus patiens* and the question regarding the identity of its author, are separate and distinct issues, interrelated but not interdependent.

In the first part of this chapter, an illustration has been presented of the confusion and dispute arising from failing to observe the distinction between these two issues. Though some aspects of the authenticity issue - e.g. the historical era in which a work was composed - may influence to a certain extent the appreciation of its literary, historical, or theological significance, inauthenticity does not necessarily imply mediocrity; neither can artistic or poetic brilliance provide the decisive proof that a specific work is authentic.

2) In order to obtain some measure of objectivity, a literary evaluation of the *Christus patiens* must acknowledge its centonic character.

This, in simple terms, means that a cento of tragic verses is not necessarily a tragedy (as a literary form of art); nor does it have to be "tragic" in the broader sense of the word. Cf. the significance of the phrase κατ' Εὐριπίδην, as it is discussed in the introductory chapter of this study. Aspects of the style, metre, diction, even the theological vocabulary of the play, may be influenced by its centonic character. In chapters 4, 5, and 6, some of these aspects will be discussed in more detail.

3) In the enquiry into the (in)authenticity of the play, the evidence of external criticism take precedence over arguments pertaining to internal criticism.

This is essentially Tuilier's premise, implying that explicit references to a work and its author, demonstrable parallels, and allusions, are more trustworthy indications regarding the authenticity or inauthenticity of a work than arguments based on its style, literary merits, or its technical and artistic deficiencies.

Of course, explicit references may be wrong, or deliberately misleading; whereas parallels and allusions must be carefully interpreted. This is part of the reason why Tuilier's defence of the play's authenticity was not generally accepted. This issue seems to call for further, independent examination - to which chapters 7 and 8 of this study are devoted.

It would suffice to record, at this point, an instance of the application of this supposition:

Euripidean influence on the style, metre, diction, and even the structure of the play - especially when considered within the framework of a three-legged parallel - is more conclusive evidence than, for instance, comparison of this cento to some supposedly genuine works of Gregory of Nazianzus.

\* \* \* \* \*



CHAPTER 4

ASPECTS OF THE MACROSTRUCTURE OF THE CHRISTUS PATIENS

It has been said in chapter 1 (*introduction*) that the action of the *Christus patiens* comprises the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This involuntarily leads to a comparison with the dramatization of the events of Holy Week which is traditional in the West, and of which there is evidence also in the Cyprian Passion Cycle, a Passion play reconstructed by A. C. Mahr (1947) from a scenario contained in *Codex Palatinus Graecus* 367, as edited by A. Vogt (1931). The scenes of this Cycle include the awakening of Lazarus, the pageant of the palms, the supper, the feet washing, the betrayal, Peter's denial, the questioning, the mockery of Herod, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the touching of the wounds of Jesus. In fact, the value of a comparison of the *Christus patiens* to this and other Passion plays, is that it underlines the vastly different approach to the subject matter found in the *Christus patiens*. The general pattern comprises a number of scenes corresponding to the sequence of events commemorated during Holy Week, which could - though they need not specifically - be incorporated in the liturgy.

Note: Roughly the same pattern occurs in the Passion Play of Oberammergau, with its large profusion of individual scenes, comprising the events from the entry into Jerusalem to the resurrection, and grouped into the following acts:

- 1 the Entry into Jerusalem
- 2 the Parting at Bethany
- 3 the Last Journey to Jerusalem
- 4 the Last Supper
- 5 the Betrayer
- 6 Jesus on the Mount of Olives
- 7 Jesus before Annas
- 8 Jesus is condemned to death by the High Council  
(including the penitence of Judas)
- 9 the Despair of Judas
- 10 Jesus before Pilate
- 11 Jesus is sentenced to death on the cross by Pilate
- 12 the Way to Golgotha
- 13 Jesus on Golgotha
- 14 the Resurrection

(This represents the text written in 1810/11 by Father Othmar Weiss, O.S.B., of the Benedictine Monastery of Ettal, revised by J. A. Daisenberger, Parish Priest of Oberammergau, which was used also for the 1984 production of the Oberammergau Passion Play.)

The *Christus patiens*, on the other hand, concentrates much more sharply on a smaller selection of scenes, whereas the remainder of the events are introduced by means of messenger speeches, or merely alluded to in the course of the dialogue. Moreover, the successive scenes in this play exhibit such continuity as lends to the whole an almost indivisible unity. Each transition from one scene to the next is marked simply by the introduction of a new character, while the locality remains basically unchanged.

In the *Christus patiens* the different character roles seem to be very sparsely distributed, when compared to other Passion plays. The characters involved in the dialogue at any given moment are limited with an almost Aeschylean severity. In the first part (lines 1-1133), for instance, there never occurs a moment when more than one character (excluding the χορός) is conversing with the θεοτόκος. In the second part (1134-1905) the dialogue is more lively, involving at times the θεοτόκος, the θεολόγος, Joseph of Arimathea, and (a mute) Nicodemus; but then the χορός of Galilean women have receded into the background (cf. the phrase ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι - Mt 27.55 and Mk 15.40). The single line (viz. 1433) which the χορός speaks in the course of this triangular dialogue, represents the type of interjection which can easily be understood as a remark by some interested bystanders overhearing a report not primarily addressed to them.

A third feature of the *Christus patiens* which is underlined by comparison to the Cyprus Passion Cycle, is its consistent use of poetic phraseology. In this respect, the assertion of C. A. Trypanis (1981, p. 490), viz. that the "author draws on Scripture and the Apocryphal Gospels for both his subject and his diction", seems somewhat misleading. Indeed, the author draws on Scripture for his subject - a point to which we will presently return - but very seldom does his diction reproduce the exact wording of his scriptural sources. A few examples may serve to illustrate this statement:

*Christus patiens* 161-163 & 172 (Jn 17.1-2 & 26):

Consider, for instance, Jesus' prayer shortly before the betrayal. According to Jn 17.1-2, He said: Πάτερ, ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα· δόξασόν σου τὸν υἱόν, ἵνα ὁ υἱὸς δοξάσῃ σέ, καθὼς ἔδωκας αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκός, ἵνα πᾶν ὃ δέδωκας αὐτῷ δώσῃ αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. This request is repeated in 17.5: καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, πάτερ, παρὰ σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξῃ ἣ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί. In the *Christus patiens* (lines 161-163) the prayer commences as follows:

Πάτερ, μέγιστον νῦν πάρασχε μοι κλέος·  
τὸ παρὰ σοὶ γὰρ μὴ λιπὼν ποτε κλέος,  
εἰς μεῖζον ἤξω, δυσμενῆ κτανῶν βροτῶν.

The concluding words of the prayer - according to Jn 17.26 - are: καὶ ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου καὶ γνωρίσω, ἵνα ... In the *Christus patiens* (172) these words of Jesus become:

Καὶ πρὶν κλείσας, νῦν κλείσω σε πλέον.

Note: Tuilier (1969, p.143 n.1) sees line 172 as an allusion to Jn 12.28-29. Although there are some apparent parallels between that passage and the line in question - viz. the repetition of the verb, first in the aorist and then in the future tense, as well as references to the sound of thunder (Jn 12.29 ἔλεγον βροντῆν γαγονέναι / line 170 ὡς βροντῶν) - the scriptural source of 172 is without doubt Jn 17.26. This is confirmed by the exact parallelism in context: In both passages Jesus is the speaker, the end of his prayer is indicated (Jn 18.1 ταῦτα εἰπὼν / line 173 ἐπεὶ ταῦτ' ἐνηχῆθη) and his departure to the garden is mentioned. Accordingly, it is clear that *Christus patiens* 161-172, as a whole, is based on the prayer recorded in Jn 17.

It seems that the content of the prayer is quite faithfully represented, while the phraseology is notably different. The more usual terms, like δοξάζω and γνωρίζω (τὸ ὄνομα), are replaced by poetic phrases like κλέος παρέχω and κλείζω. The meaning of δίδωμι ζωὴν αἰώνιον is paraphrased as ἔκτανον δυσμενῆ βροτῶν. These changes are not due merely to the requirements of metre; nor do they simply represent *verbatim* borrowings from Euripides. Even though lines 161 and 162-163 partly reproduce lines 1233 and 1236-1237, respectively, of the *Bacchae*, the words and phrases discussed above do not occur in those lines of the Euripidean play. Thus it seems that the author's use of poetic phraseology is a function of his own choice and preference.

*Christus patiens* 727-729 (Jn 19.26-27):

Another example of the difference in phraseology between the play and its scriptural sources, is the first address of the crucified Jesus to his mother. In the fourth Gospel (19.26) we read: Ἰησοῦς οὖν . . . λέγει τῇ μητρὶ· γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου. Then Jesus said to the disciple: ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου. In the *Christus patiens*, the words spoken by Christ are:

Ἴδ', ὧ γυναικῶν ἐξ ἀπασῶν βελτίων,

ὁ παρθένος πάρεστιν υἱός σοι νέος.

Ἴδου δὲ καὶ σοί, μύστα, μήτηρ παρθένος. (727-729)

The phrase γύναι, ἴδε is transformed into a trimeter line, and so is ὁ υἱός σου. Note the occurrence of alliteration and *homoioteleuton* in 727-8. The figure of alliteration is even more conspicuous in line 729, the poetic transformation of the prosaic ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου.

When these three lines from the play are considered jointly, it seems that the simple parallelism of the Gospel narrative (ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου - ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου) is transformed into an intricate poetic pattern. A reciprocal *a-b-c-c-b-a* pattern -

παρθένος

υἱός

σοι

σοι

μήτηρ

παρθένος

- is interspersed with ἴδε/ἰδοῦ and vocatives, in such a way as to mitigate its strictness, and to produce the striking juxtaposition μύστα - μήτηρ in line 729.

*Christus patiens* 2060-2068 (Mt 28.5-7/Mk 16.6-7):

The words spoken by the angel announcing the resurrection, according to Mt 28.5-7, are: Μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὑμεῖς, οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον ζητεῖτε· οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε, ἠγέρθη γὰρ καθὼς εἶπεν· δεῦτε ἴδετε τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἔκειτο· καὶ ταχὺ πορευθεῖσαι εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἠγέρθη ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἰδοῦ προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν, ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε· ἰδοῦ εἶπον ὑμῖν.

Almost the same words occur in Mk 16.6-7. Apart from a few phrases added by Matthew, e.g. οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι and καθὼς εἶπεν, the only differences in phraseology are μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε for μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν for ὅπου ἔκειτο, and ὑπάγετε εἶπατε for πορευθεῖσαι εἶπατε. The corresponding passage in the *Christus patiens* (2060-8) reads as follows:

Ἵμμες δὲ μὴ θροεῖσθε, μηδ' ἔστω φόβος· 2060  
ζητούμενος γὰρ οὐκέτ' ἐστὶν ἐν τάφῳ.  
Ἄναξ Ἰησοῦς τῆτες ἐσταυρωμένος·  
ὅδ' οὐκέτ' ἐστὶν ἐν τάφῳ νεκρὸς μένων.  
ἀλλ' ἐξεγερθεὶς εἰς Γαλιλαίαν τρέχει·  
ὡς εἶπε, μύσταις ὀπτάνεσθαι νῦν θέλει. 2065  
κενὸν δ' ἰοῦσαι τὸν τόπον κατίδετε.  
Ἄπιτε γοῦν, ἄπιτε καὶ ταῦτα σφίσιν  
εἶπατε τρανῶς· πάντα γὰρ ἔγωγ' ἔφην.

When compared to the Gospel sources, this passage seems to resemble its scriptural precedents quite closely. All the elements occurring in the corresponding Gospel passages are reflected in these lines, whereas the play contains only a small number of additions. These seem to be the result of the specific intentions of the author:

1) Line 2063 (ὅδ' οὐκέτ' ἐστὶν ἐν τάφῳ νεκρὸς μένων) contains the additional elements (οὐκ)έτι and μένων, and the more specific ἐν τάφῳ (for ὡς), presumably to place emphasis on the contrast dead-and-buried / alive-and-out-of-the-tomb. This is supported by another additional element in the play, viz. τῆτες in 2062, and by the repetition of οὐκέτ' ἐστὶν ἐν τάφῳ in 2061 and 2063.

2) The appositional Ἄναξ in line 2062, and ὀπτάνεσθαι θέλει for ὄψεσθε, are probably intended to stress the sovereignty of the crucified and resurrected Jesus.

3) The adverb τρανῶς and the adjective πάντα, in line 2068, are elements not occurring in the corresponding passages in the Gospels. Both seem intended to emphasize that the full content of the angel's message must be told.

Three points of difference in phraseology between the Gospel passages in question have been mentioned above. When the corresponding phrases in the *Christus patiens* are compared to these, a marked harmonizing tendency of the play is revealed:

1) Line 2060 - "Ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ θροεῖσθε, μηδ' ἔστω φόβος - consists of two semantically parallel expressions. This could merely be due to stylistic considerations; though on closer examination the phrases μὴ θροεῖσθε and μηδ' ἔστω φόβος seem to reflect both the μὴ φοβεῖσθε of Mt 28.5, and its Markan equivalent μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε (Mk 16.6).

2) The similar - though not identical - phrases πορευθεῖσθαι (εἶπατε) and ὑπάγετε (εἶπατε) are represented in the play by the repetition of a synonymous expression: Ἄπιτε γοῦν, ἄπιτε (καὶ ... εἶπατε). Repetitions like these occur quite frequently in the play; yet it seems significant that this particular instance - like the parallel expressions in 2060 - coincides with a difference in phraseology between the Gospel sources on which the passage is modelled.

3) No choice is made between the variants ὅπου ἔκειτο and ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν, both being represented in the play by the paraphrase κενὸν ... τὸν τόπον.

The inference to be drawn from these examples, is that the author of the *Christus patiens* paid considerable attention to the details of his scriptural sources, with regard to content as well as phraseology. In his implementation of the material from these sources, he was careful to represent the contents quite closely, while mostly diverging from the characteristic phraseology of the Gospels. The nature of these deviations reveal a preference for poetic vocabulary and diction, which implies more than mere versifying of the Gospel texts. In terms of vocabulary, this preference is manifested in words like βροτός (for ἄνθρωπος), κλέος (for δόξα), μύστης (without exception, for μαθητής), and τάφος (instead of μνημεῖον).

Isolated passages do occur, however, where the play preserves the exact phraseology of the corresponding Gospel passages,

e.g. *Christus patiens* 180 & 183 (Mt 26.49-50):

‘Ραββὶ προσειπὼν χαῖρ’, ἐφίλει δυστρόπως.

Οὐκ εἶπεν οὐδέν, πλὴν ‘Ἐταῖρ’, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάρει;

These verses belong to the speech of a messenger, who reports to the θεοτόκος the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. The same words are recorded in Mt 26.49-50: εἶπεν· χαῖρε, ῥαββί, καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἑταῖρε, ἐφ’ ὃ πάρει;

Note: Rather than constituting a deviation from the source, the slight change from ἐφ’ ὃ to ἐφ’ ᾧ seems to be due to necessity. Without this lengthening of the syllable, the phrase ἑταῖρ(ε), ἐφ’ ὃ πάρει; could not be incorporated into the iambic trimeter.

On two occasions the metrical pattern of the play has been suspended, in order to retain the exact phraseology of the source. These are:

- 1) *Christus patiens* 2097 (Mt 28.9): Χαίρετε.
- 2) Line 2504 (Jn 20.19): Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.

Note, however, that these are rare exceptions to the rule: only two lines out of 2602. The author’s normal treatment of material drawn from Scripture is to reformulate it according to the demands of the iambic metre, implementing to a certain extent verses taken from Euripides, but impressing on the final product the stamp of his own preference regarding both diction and vocabulary. In this process of transformation, he remains remarkably true to the content of his biblical sources.

This last point, viz. that the author of the *Christus patiens* represents quite faithfully the contents of his scriptural sources, has some definite implications for the literary evaluation of the play. These will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

\* \* \*

The relation of the *Christus patiens* to the Gospel narrative is analogous in many respects to the relation between ancient tragedy and the corpus of Greek mythology. Mythology, to the ancient Greeks, was not a mere storehouse of stories - to use a phrase of D. W. Lucas (1959, p. 37) - but a vehicle for thought and emotion. It represented that body of collective experience on which poetry, and drama especially, depended to become meaningful communication between author and audience. With few exceptions, the 5th century tragedians turned to mythology for their plots. Convention seems to have dictated that they restrict their choice of themes mainly to three major "cycles" of mythology: the Trojan cycle, the Oedipus myth, and the Heracles saga. However, this is not to say that they were restricted to any "canonical" version of the myths. They could choose with considerable liberty between divergent and sometimes conflicting versions of a story, and in their plot construction each was free to express his own tragic view of life, and develop his own dramatic technique.

The author of the *Christus patiens* also selected his theme from such a body of collective knowledge, viz. the "myth" of God's concern with the salvation of mankind, personified in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. The play can communicate true meaning only to those for whom this "myth" has become a basic life experience providing the common ground necessary for meaningful communication. The theme which the author has selected from this "cycle", concerns the central events of the crucifixion and resurrection. Up to this point, he had an open choice; but once he had made this choice, he was confronted with not one, but four canonical versions of the "myth". This fact compelled him, as it were, to harmonize rather than select, and to condense rather than amplify, as far as the actions included in the plot are concerned. When the plot had been constructed on these principles, the author could elaborate on specific points, implementing and adapting material from classical tragedy and from apocryphal sources.

Note: The only instance of the conflation of parallel scenes occurring in the play, is the "second visit" to the tomb (lines 2116-2173); but this is also an attempt at harmonizing material from divergent Gospel sources.



When viewed in this light, the verdict of C. A. Trypanis (1981, p.490), viz. that the play has "hardly any plot and no dramatic tension", seems unjustified. The plot of more than one ancient tragedy consists of little more than the eventual offstage killing of a major foe. What more dramatic action could be envisaged than the destroying of death, the ultimate enemy of all humanity?

In fact, it is an open question whether Trypanis based this assertion on first-hand knowledge of the play. His references to Lycophron's *Alexandra* - instead of *Cassandra* - and to the *Rhoesus* (sic) of Euripides, may be due to errors of proof reading, but a different picture emerges when the following two quotations are compared:

Krumbacher (1897, p.747) -

Die Hauptrolle trägt nicht Christus, sondern Maria. Damit hängt der Mangel einer Handlung und einer dramatischen Steigerung zusammen; der grösste Teil des Stückes besteht aus langen Botenerzählungen und ebenso ausgedehnten Klagereden; Christus selbst steht im Hintergrunde, und wir hören von ihm meist nur durch Berichte anderer Personen.

Trypanis (1981, p.490) -

The central figure of the piece is Mary, not Christ, who is kept in the background and about whom we only hear from others. There is hardly any plot and no dramatic tension, the largest part of the play consisting of messengers' speeches and lamentations.

From this comparison it seems that Trypanis has simply missed the word "meist" while copying this passage from Krumbacher's "Geschichte".

\* \* \*

Much criticism has been voiced against the *Christus patiens* on the assumption that it was intended for stage performance. That this was probably not the case, is illustrated by the following:

1) There is no historical evidence of the play ever being performed in Byzantine or mediaeval times. In fact, there is

no evidence of the existence of drama in its classical sense in Byzantium. Cf. in this respect Krumbacher (1897, pp. 644; 747) and Mitsakis (1986, pp. 330 ff.).

2) In the ὑπόθεσις or argument preceding the dialogue, the play is introduced as primarily a poetic rather than dramatic work. Cf. the discussion of the relevant passage from the ὑπόθεσις in chapter 1 (introduction).

3) The metre and diction of the play (cf. the first section of this chapter) lend to it a totally different character from what would have been popular entertainment, even in the 4th century.

Yet different scholars have pronounced extremely negative judgements of the play, measuring it by all the standards of classical (5th century BC) tragedy. Krumbacher (1897, p.747) is no exception:

Dass die aristotelische Einheit von Ort und Zeit überschritten wird, darf nicht auffallen; das Drama leidet aber auch an starken Verstössen gegen die elementarsten Regeln der Technik. Trotzdem hat man versucht, durch verschiedene Kunstgriffe das Werk mit den Anforderungen der Dramatik in Einklang zu bringen – gewiss mit Unrecht. In der Zeit, als dieses Scheindrama entstand, fehlte die wichtigste Voraussetzung dieser Litteraturgattung (*sic*), die Aufführung; und auch das Studium der alten Stücke wurde nicht derart betrieben, dass aus demselben eine Einsicht in die Technik hätte erwachsen können. Es wäre ein wahres Wunder, wenn unter solchen Verhältnissen ein Dichter die inneren und äusseren Gesetze der Dramatik erfasst und in einem wirklichen Kunstwerke zum Ausdrucke gebracht hätte.

The implication seems to be that the *Christus patiens* cannot be a true work of art, since it was composed at a time when dramatic performance did not exist as a literary form of art. Although Krumbacher regarded the play as a product of the 11th or 12th century, the same argument would apply to the 4th century.

Even when the question of the play's authenticity is entirely disregarded, though, it still retains an ambivalent aspect. This is to say, it tends to evoke conflicting literary and aesthetic judgements, not only from different critics, but even within the minds - and within single paragraphs - of individual scholars. The following quotation from J. Mossay (1971, p.298) may serve to illustrate this statement:

Les emprunts verbaux faits au texte d'Euripide sont assez libres pour ne pas paraître choquants ou artificiels; mais la structure générale du drame est évidemment conventionnelle et relève d'une esthétique antique, déjà absolument dépassée à l'époque de Grégoire de Nazianze et *a fortiori* à une époque plus récente. L'oeuvre garde néanmoins son charme littéraire ...

The main problem confronting Mossay seems to be how to react, psychologically, to a literary production belonging to an era in which tastes differed greatly from those of the late 20th century, though reviving - if only by way of imitating - the literary practices and conventions pertaining to an era much earlier than the time of its actual composition.

\* \* \*

In the final analysis, every reader will have to form his own opinion about the literary value of the play. Since this can only be done by first-hand acquaintance with the work itself, the following two chapters are devoted to detailed discussion of extensive passages from the play: lines 1-90, and 267-357. These two passages, it may be noted, have not been selected at random. The first is the prologue of the play - chosen because the beginning is in a very real sense the logical place to start. The second is one of the longer monologues of the play - chosen for two reasons: firstly, because the play is often criticized as consisting largely of monologues (laments and messenger speeches); and secondly, since in this and the previous chapters, shorter sections of the dialogue have already been discussed from different perspectives.

\* \* \* \* \*

### EXPOSITION OF THE PROLOGUE

The prologue to be discussed in this chapter is not the introduction to the play, which contains an indication of its centonic nature and a short summary of the opening scene, but the proper dramatic prologue – a monologue, spoken in this case by the protagonist, explaining the essence of the tragic situation, indicating the identity of the speaking character, as well as the precise moment within the course of the "mythical" events at which the dramatic action commences, and ending with an indication of some external event which sets the action in motion.

The syntactical structure of the very first sentence (lines 1-31) recalls the opening lines of the Euripidean *Medea*: Εἴθ' ὄφελ' ... μηδ' ... οὐ γὰρ ἔν ... . It refers to a "mythical" event which the speaker identifies as the first cause of the present unfavourable situation. Simultaneously, it serves to indicate the emotional attitude of the speaker to this situation, expressing an unfulfilled wish that this had never occurred.

Within these lines there are many details worth noticing. Firstly, the protasis consists of two parallel expressions referring to the same event: the serpent intruding in the garden (cf. Gen 3). The attribute ἀγκυλομήτης (line 3) is emphatically placed at the end of the second of these phrases. Lexically and poetically, it is a perfect choice: it gives an almost visual description of the serpent, while stressing its lethal wiliness/cunning (cf. Gen 3.1).

The results of this initial event are described in the apodosis of the conditional sentence (lines 3b-31). It is a lengthy exposition, but is neatly structured by syntactic articulation which supports its semantic continuity. The main units are introduced by οὐ γὰρ ἔν (line 3), οὐδ' ἔν (line 8), οὐδ' ἔν (line 19), and οὐδ' ἔν (line 23). Semantically, these units concern the following aspects:

- 1) the first sin committed by Eve, mother of the human race;
- 2) the immediate consequences: she is banned from paradise, condemned to the woes of childbearing, and suffers hardship on this earth together with her husband and children;
- 3) the further consequences: the entire human race is in a state of decay, which can only be rectified by intervention of God – assuming human nature and suffering;
- 4) the present result: the virgin mother suffers as she hears of her son being dragged before a court of judgement, and she fears to see him being maltreated.

Concerning the first of these units (lines 3-7) the following may be noted:

- The act itself (eating of the forbidden fruit) is not defined, but is referred to in terms expressing abhorrence of its audacious nature: τόλμημα τολμᾶν παντότολμον ἀνέτιλη (line 5). This attitude towards the first sin is emphasized by the almost obtrusive alliteration produced by repetition of the same stem (τολμα-) in four consecutive words.
- The rest of the syntactic unit is structured concentrically around this line, adding further emphasis to the central statement. The lines immediately preceding and following it contain indications of the mental state that led to such an audacious act, expressed by the participles ἠπατημένη (4) and ἐκπεπληγμένη (6) – note the end rhyme – while the outer circle of this concentric pattern is formed by an identification of the subject (3b) and of her reason for desiring the forbidden fruit (7).

The first phrase identifying Eve – πλευρᾶς φύμα (3) – recalls Gen 2.21-2. Tuilier (p. 129 n. 1) calls it a "métaphore intraduisible", excusing thereby his rendering "la femme". At first glance it also seems to be a vague allusion, requiring a *tour de force* to be interpreted. However, when considered within the context of the concentric pattern of which it forms a part, the poet's intent is revealed. Eve, being part of God's creation (πλευρᾶς φύμα – line 3), is beguiled (4) into desiring (6) not so much the fruit itself as the divine attributes which she is persuaded that it will confer upon her (line 7 – cf. Gen 3.4-5). This underlines once more the

ἁβρίς involved in the first act of sin.

The second syntactic unit within the apodosis (lines 8-18) describes the immediate consequences which the first sin has for Eve. It is subdivided into three aspects, viz. -

- 1) she is banned from paradise,
- 2) she is condemned to the woes of childbearing, and
- 3) she suffers hardship together with her husband and children.

These subdivisions are indicated syntactically by the conjunction τε - and the recurring of ἄν - with the indicative verbs ἐξώκιστο (10), ἤκουσεν (12), and ᾤκει (14). (It seems to me line 14 should read ἰδρῶ τε) ἄν ᾤκει ... - implementing the Epic form - in stead of ἰδρῶ(ι) ἄν ᾤκει.)

The subdivisions may now be considered separately. Note, firstly, some poetic features of line 8:

- Like line 7, it contains a participle of πείθω with an infinitive dependent on this; but the words are arranged in inverse order, so as to create a chiasmatic pattern:

πεισθεῖσα	τυχεῖν
φαγεῖν	πείσασα

- The semantic content of πείσασα (8) differs from that of πεισθεῖσα (7), in as far as persuading a person to do something differs from believing something. This type of verbal repetition, involving different meanings of the same word, is a stylistic device frequently occurring in classical tragedy.

- The grammatical forms of the word πείθω (passive in line 7 but active in line 8) support the shift of emphasis which occurs on the semantic level: after being beguiled into desiring the forbidden fruit, Eve now becomes actively involved in sin, even to the point of enticing another to do the same.

The banishing from the garden (line 10) is emphasized by contrastive technique: the reference to the garden (λειμῶνος ... τοῦ πανολβίου) is surrounded by an indication of the negative value of the fruit (μηδὲ συμφέροντος ... σφίσι - an understatement) and of the conditions prevailing outside of

the garden (λύμην ... καὶ λυγρὸν μέρος). Note, also, the balancing of syntactic elements: the indicative ἐξώκιστο is surrounded by two participle phrases, viz. πείσασα ... (8) and κατακριθεῖσα ... (11) - an instance of τὸ στρογγύλον, perhaps?

The second aspect of the consequences of sin for Eve - being condemned to the woes of childbearing - is described in lines 12-3 (cf. Gen 3.16). Note the heavy emphasis produced by the three phrases ἐκ δυσκοιτίας (12), μογαστοκοῦσα (13), and ὠδῖσί τ' ἐμπαρειμένη (13) all expressing similar content, as well as by the predominance of long syllables in line 12.

The third aspect of these consequences - suffering hardship - is expounded in lines 14-8. Lines 14 and 15 are parallel in structure. The first phrase in 15 supplements the first in 14, and the second in 15 (ἄρας ὑστάτης) explains the second in 14 (τήνδε γῆν ὄλεθρίαν). Incidentally, the adjective ὄλεθρίαν is to be understood in its passive sense - "lost" or "undone" - because of the last curse; the last of three, that is. (Cf. Gen 3.14-7: the first affects the serpent, the second one affects the woman, and the last, addressed to the man, declares the earth to be accursed because of man's sin.)

Note: If this parallelism is not taken into account, one may end up like Tuilier, rendering "... sur cette terre de mort, avec son mari et les enfants de malédiction", and having to ignore the adjective ὑστάτης, which does not fit the context then.

The elaboration in lines 16-8 serves to keep attention focused upon the destiny of the woman - to bear children λύπαις καὶ στόνοις, to produce an offspring, and thereby to obtain reconciliation.

(This seems to be the poet's interpretation of I Tim 2.15: σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας.)

The third syntactic unit of the apodosis (lines 19-22) concerns the further consequences of the initial event to which the protasis referred: now all of humanity is in a state of ruin, from which only divine intervention can bring salvation. In these lines the scope of thought is enlarged

to a cosmic scale. It concerns man and God, ruin and restoration. Note the syntactic articulation: γένος τ(ε) ... καὶ τὸν Δυνατόν ... The infinitive ἀλθανεῖν (20) is dependent upon Δυνατόν: "the One who can restore". The other three infinitives are dependent upon ἔπεισε, as is indicated by the conjunctions: καπιέναι ... βρωτῶθῆναί τε καὶ τλῆσαι ... (Tuilier interprets the passage differently, rendering τὸν Δυνατόν by "le Tout-Puissant", and treating all four infinitives as co-ordinate statements.)

In lines 23-31 (the fourth syntactic unit within the apodosis of the conditional sentence) the present result of the first sin is described: the virgin mother suffers as she hears of her son being dragged before a court of judgement and fears to see him being maltreated. (It should be kept in mind that this is part of a conditional sentence expressing an unfulfilled condition: every repetition of "I would not ..." is sounding the refrain "I am ...")

Note, incidentally, the explicit ἐγώ in line 23. It adds emphasis to the first indication, within the text, of who the speaking character is. This indication is given at the appropriate moment, when the context focuses attention upon the speaker. In this respect also, the poet follows the example of his classical models.

Two perspectives are delicately interwoven in lines 23-7:

- Regarding the virgin mother, these lines form a crescendo, with line 23 simply stating her identity, line 24 mentioning what she hears about her son, line 26 expressing her reaction of shock to see him being maltreated, and line 27 stating by way of metaphor the effect of all this upon her.
- Regarding her son, these same lines form a concentric circular pattern by which the terms defining his origin and nature are emphasized: while lines 23 and 27 refer to the mother only, 24 and 26 explicitly name the son as object of her concern (υἰόν in 24, and τόνδε in 26), adding emphasis by the rhyming effect of ἔκλυον υἰόν ... and ... ἔφριπτον τόνδε καθυβρισμένον surrounding οὐράνιον, γήϊνον (25).



The attributes οὐράνιον and γήϊνον - here effectively juxtaposed without any conjunction - are the first hint at what is to become a very important theme of the play, viz. the double nature of Christ.

*Cf.* Trisoglio (1979, p. 339): "L'originalità e la vitalità poetica della Vergine risiedono proprio nell'essere ella madre del διφυῆς (v. 1795): nel suo cuore di creatura si scontrano due grandezze misteriose in sé ed incommensurabili tra di loro: ha la missione di fare da cerniera a due mondi che si regolano con norme diverse. ... Alle due nature di Gesù era logico che, psicologicamente, corrispondessero nella Madre le due reazioni dello strazio e della fede."

If this is true, and if it is revealed to be the basic concept upon which the characterization of the protagonist is founded, it constitutes another (internal) argument against the hypothesis of Cataudella (1969). It would imply that the revision supposed by Cataudella was so radical that it affected the very essence of the character of the protagonist. I find it difficult to be convinced that a remodelling of that extent could have occurred, without causing the dramatic framework of the whole play to collapse.

(Moreover, this aspect of the play may provide a sensible answer to those objections against a fourth century Cappadocian origin which are based upon the characterization of the Virgin, but which consider this characterization from a narrow theological perspective. An investigation of this aspect may reveal that the characterization of the Virgin does not passively reflect a fully developed Mariology, but rather that it is inspired by a firmly orthodox Christology, and as such explores new facets of Mariology. If this is true, it points at an earlier date rather than a later one.)

The metaphor of line 27 - φέρουσα ... δεινὴν φλόγα - is elaborated in lines 28-31. The relative construction allows a transition to positive statements in the present indicative, by which the effect of the present events upon the virgin mother is vividly described: μαιμάσσει με ... δονεῖ κέαρ ... καρδίαν δίσσειν. This is supported by the concurrent transition from ἐγώ ... φέρουσα ... to the accusative με (28), also made possible by the relative construction.

Lines 30-1 refer to the prophecy of Simeon (καὶ σοῦ δὲ αὐτῆς τὴν ψυχὴν διελεύσεται ῥομφαία - Lk 2.35), probably suggesting that the virgin mother is only now beginning to understand the full meaning of those words.

\* \* \*

After line 31 there occurs an abrupt change of tone. By means of a gnomic utterance, the poet momentarily eases the intensity produced by the metaphor of lines 27-9. The focus of attention is removed from the virgin mother, and a point is provided from which the basic theme of the prologue can be expounded anew.

Lines 32-6 provide a contrast to the terse statement of the present situation in lines 37-8. Although gnomic in character, those lines are still to the point, in as far as they express the attitude which Eve should have had, but did not have. Note the stylistic structuring. The subject of γίνεται (32), that is, the definition of what constitutes μέγιστη σωτηρία, is formulated in a parallel pattern:

ὅταν ... μὴ διχοστατῆ — συμφέρουσα  
μηδέ ... κλύη — ... συμφρονοῦσα

This is supported by the rhyming effect of the key words, while the semantic opposition between ideal and reality is also highlighted by end rhyme: σωτηρία - καίρια.

Ideal versus reality: the perfect state which has been brought to an end because of sin, in contrast to the imperfect, unfavourable reality which resulted - but the precise relation of this reality to that initial sin has not yet been defined. Perhaps it cannot be defined; at least, not in logical terms. Therefore the poet implements three parallel expressions of gnomic character (lines 39-42): ancient *hybris* tends to produce *hybris* anew; from tears ever flow more tears; evil vies with evil. Within this parallel pattern, the central statement is emphasized by its position as well as by the relative phrase defining δάκρυα.

This theme of remorse without measure is expounded in the

next sentence (lines 43-50). It is not stated in general terms, as in the previous lines; the subject is specified: πότνια φύσις (43). Whether this phrase refers to Eve – the mother of the human race – or to the whole of humanity, is left unanswered for the moment. The syntactic core of the sentence (στένει ... , ἐπεὶ ... ἥσθετο ...) provides two points of reference, from which the elaboration of thoughts commences:

- Το στένει (44) are added two participles: κλάουσα and συντήκουσα (sc. δακρύοις). The first of these introduces the reasons for lamenting, the second serves to indicate the perpetuation thereof. Note the effect produced by the word order in line 46: τὸν πάντα ... χρόνον is extended to the total length of the line by inserting συντήκουσα δακρύοις between the adjective and the noun.

- The content of ἥσθετο (47), viz. ἠδικημένη, is specified by πρὸς ἐχθροῦ ... καί ... βλάβη, the latter being defined by μητρὸς αὐτῆς ... πατρός (τις). Both genitives μητρὸς and πατρός are further defined in lines 48 and 49 respectively, and the loose ends are neatly tied together in the relative phrase of line 50.

All of the details mentioned above may be considered external or objective aspects of the theme of remorse. The internal, subjective (perhaps "psychological") aspect thereof is expressed by the participles ἠτιμωμένη and ἠδικημένη. (Incidentally, their rhyming sound pattern supports the syntactic balance of the sentence, the first being associated with στένει and the second with ἥσθετο.) The dishonour and injury to which these terms refer, are manifestations of the humiliation which human nature suffered because of the first sin. The adjective πότνια (43) serves to emphasize by way of contrast the participle ἠτιμωμένη; note the effective positioning of these two words in line 43, directly before and after φύσις.

But who is this πότνια φύσις ἠτιμωμένη? Is it the mother of the human race, the one whose origin was indicated by the metaphor πλευρᾶς φύμα (line 3)? – her venerable nature was indeed humiliated by that first βλάβη. Or does the phrase

refer to the whole of humanity, her descendants and heirs to her miserable condition? Or did the poet intend both, perhaps, and deliberately left the ambiguity unresolved? An answer may be found in αὐτῆς (line 48). If it is to be understood as the personal pronoun defining μητρός, then the descendants of that mother are intended. If, however, it is to be understood as defining βλάβη, then the mother herself is intended, being defined by the appositional μητρός ... πρωτοπήμονος. In prose, word order and the presence of the definite article would have decided the matter; but this is poetry, and the ambiguity remains.

It was stated above that line 50 neatly ties together the loose ends of this sentence. What was meant, is this:

- The relative ὧν jointly refers to μητρός and πατρός, the progenitors of the human race (ἔκγονοι).
- The phrase πάντες ... οἱ κατὰ χθόν(α) suggests (without stating explicitly) that the whole of humanity is included in the destiny of the first sinners.
- The verb ἔσμεν (first person plural) includes the Virgin also, thus suggesting once again that the results of the first sin continues into the present. One may even see in this a direct reminder to the reader - audience? - of also being included among the ἔκγονοι of Adam and Eve.
- Syntactically, this line reveals perfect symmetry. Thus style, syntax, and content all add to the poetic aptness of this concluding phrase.

The following lines (51-5) open another perspective upon the reactions of Eve - or of mankind? - to the consequences of sin. Lines 51-2 recall the reaction of Eve, when confronted with what she had done: she blamed it all upon the serpent (cf. Gen 3.4 & 13). Line 55 depicts another typically human reaction: detesting that which reminds one of one's sin. In this case it is the natural environment (κόσμον), so totally different from paradise.

Note the stylistic pattern of these lines: a series of short, co-ordinately arranged phrases is interrupted by a two-line explanation. This in itself is an example of the *varietas*

which some critics are unable to detect in the poetic fibre of the play; but it may become even clearer when the style of these lines is compared to the periodic style of the previous sentence (43-50).

Incidentally, these lines contain a notable concentration of "transgressions" of the "laws" which some hold to apply to iambic trimeters. Among the five lines, three do not have a paroxytone ending; and the second  $\alpha$  in ἀνακαλεῖ (line 51) has to be arbitrarily lengthened to avoid a foot consisting of only two short syllables. However, those critics who object to the attribution of the play to Gregory on the basis of the metrical deficiencies which it is held to exhibit, should note that all these lines are taken from the *Medea* of Euripides, without any alterations which affect the metre. This does not mean that Euripides is to be blamed for every single deviation from the norm in terms of metre. There are many instances in the play, where the author's adaptation of a Euripidean line has caused the metrical deviation. It is very unlikely, though, that the author - whoever he be - would not allow himself the same liberties as those characterizing the verse from which he draws as his main poetic source.

From line 56 onward, the attention is once more focused upon the virgin mother and on her present situation. This is indicated by the use of a first person singular form of the verb in 56, and the pronoun  $\mu(\epsilon)$  in 57. The conjunction γάρ in 56 is not to be understood in the strict sense of indicating the cause of the foregoing, since the sentence as a whole has the conventional function of explaining the presence of the speaking character on stage. Once this has been done, the virgin can proceed with an exposition of her own involvement in the events of the play (lines 59 ff.).

Though consisting of a number of independent syntactic units, lines 59-70 are semantically linked up and structured around a central theme. From a stylistic viewpoint, it may be noted that this passage is an example of the λόγος ἀφελῆς or the loose rhetorical style, where phrases are strung together

without much use of subordination and often with the omission of connectives. In the process of interpreting these lines, however, close attention should be paid to the semantic structuring of the passage as a whole.

The central theme of these lines is the miraculous birth of Christ and the virginity of the mother Mary; but this is set within the frame of her present suffering, the nature of which it serves to explain. Consider, firstly, the frame:

- In lines 59-60 she states that "the poor woman" has not ceased from wailing; the one, that is, who gave birth and yet did not give birth, or rather, who escaped the pangs of childbirth. This paradox is to be explained in the following lines, by yet another paradox.

- The rhetorical question and exclamation of line 68 refer to the second paradox: that the virgin had a child, is reason for astonishment. But how is she now to bear seeing him being insulted? This second rhetorical question (69) focuses attention on her present suffering, which is psychological, not physical. The contrast is confirmed in line 70, in an exclamation consisting of two phrases, the first recalling line 68, the second, line 69.

Note: It seems the phrase  $\pi\omega\varsigma$   $\acute{o}$ δυνῶμαι κέαρ (line 70) is to be taken as an exclamation, not as a question. Otherwise it would indicate the present suffering of the virgin as being paradoxical, which obviously does not suit the context. Furthermore, the repetition of  $\pi\omega\varsigma$  in four consecutive lines (68, 69, 70, and 71) should in itself be an indication that a difference in usage is to be expected. Thus, after the questions  $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\alpha$   $\pi\omega\varsigma$   $\acute{\epsilon}$ τικτον; - suggesting a paradox - and ...  $\pi\omega\varsigma$   $\omicron$ ἴσω βλέπειν; - suggesting precisely that to see her son being insulted is unbearable - the phrase in 70 serves to emphasize her mental agony.

The central theme of lines 59-70, as stated above, concerns the birth of Christ and the virginity of Mary. The first of these two aspects has been referred to in line 60; the paradoxical nature thereof is explained in lines 61-3. This "explanation", however, is nothing more than a series of re-formulations of the same thought, interrupted by phrases which indicate the impossibility of explaining this miracle in terms of logic. Thus the oxymoron of line 60 is echoed in line 62, followed by the phrase  $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$   $\acute{\upsilon}$ περ λόγον. The next line

contains another oxymoron (τόκον ... ἄτοκον), followed by a rhetorical question (τί γὰρ φράσω;) which creates the expectation of yet another re-formulation. This is given in line 64, but the phrase πόνους φυγοῦσα comes very close to repeating the last phrase of line 60 (φεύγουσ' αὖ τόκους). The only way out of this circle is by adding a second object to φυγοῦσα, viz. φθοράν (loss of virginity). Lines 65-7 serve to explain this aspect of the theme, culminating in the explicit statement οὐ γὰρ κορείης ἄμμα διέφθειρέ τις. (Note the association φθορά-διαφθείρω.) This statement leads quite naturally to the rhetorical question of line 68.

The semantic pattern of the passage in question is reinforced also by the recurrence of the same thought in the phrases φεύγουσ' αὖ τόκους (60) and πόνους φυγοῦσα (64 and 70). In line 60 the term τόκος is appropriate, by reason of its contribution to the sound pattern of that line as well as its specific reference to childbirth. The term πόνος, on the other hand, fits better into the sound pattern of both lines 64 and 70, where it occurs in contexts which prevent it from being misunderstood. Moreover, it serves to suggest a contrast between Mary and Eve: the latter suffered physical πόνοι (cf. line 45), while Mary, albeit πόνους φυγοῦσα, suffers mentally.

In sum then, the semantic structure of this passage consists of a central theme, the two aspects of which are jointly stated in line 64, and expounded in lines 61-3 and 65-7, respectively; this theme is set in the frame of the present suffering of the virgin mother - mentioned only in line 59, but forcefully emphasized in lines 68-70.

After line 70, the poet introduces a diversion comparable to that which occurs after line 31 - comparable in function, though not in type. After line 31, the emotional intensity is abated by means of a gnomic utterance which removes the focus of attention from the virgin mother; whereas here, after 70, the same effect is produced, but this time by contrasting her present suffering to her joy at the annunciation. From a stylistic viewpoint, this contrast is enhanced both by the

figures of asyndeton and of chiasmus:

πῶς ὀδυνῶμαι κέαρ  
ἀνηλάλαξα πῶς ...

The stylistic structure of lines 71-4 is also worth noticing: the neat chiasmus occurring in lines 73-4 (φράζων ἄλυξιν - χάρμα ... φέρων) supports the larger chiastic pattern of the sentence, with its play upon content and reaction:

χαρᾶς ὑπο τόκον  
ἄλυξιν χάρμα

(Note, however, that the term ἄλυξιν is not defined by δυσμενῶν βροτῶν. If that were the case, the unmarked lexical meaning of both ἄλυξις and δυσμενής would produce the sense "(announcing) escape from enemies"; whereas in these lines, the context requires the sense "(announcing) salvation (to the race) of wretched mortals".)

In lines 75-8, reference is made to Mary's first reaction to the annunciation, namely that of disbelief (*cf.* Lk 1.34). The formulation in these lines almost sounds like a reproach of the archangel, for not revealing that her son was to be a sacrifice; but the intention is rather to emphasize that upon accepting the angel's message, she had reason for great joy. So, though finding the announcement hard to believe, she gave expression to her joy (*cf.* Lk 1.46 ff.) and conducted herself in a way which is considered proper for faithful servants of the Lord (lines 79-86; *cf.* Lk 1.38, 48). This is expounded at length, in a passage rather loosely structured, in which the figure of asyndeton is conspicuous. The poetic purpose of these lines is to provide a background against which line 87 is effectively contrasted.

The emotional content of the entire prologue is concentrated in line 87. In this line, rhetorical style and the choice of words collaborate to produce the intended effect:

- The rhetorical question, or rather exclamation, introduced by (καὶ) πῶς, recalls the occurrence of the same figure in lines 70 and 71. Thus it is contrasted to the sense of joy evoked by lines 71 ff. while reflecting the grief of line 70.



- The adverb νῦν is balanced against πάλαι (line 71), to support the contrast between this line and the foregoing.
- The metaphor στροβεῖ ... σπλάγχνα ... δριμύ βέλος recalls that of lines 28-9 (... δονεῖ κέαρ καὶ καρδίαν δῖεισιν ὡς ῥόπτρον μέγα), which marked the first moment when attention was sharply focused upon the suffering of Mary.

In this way line 87 completes the main pattern of the prologue, viz. successive expositions of different themes, each of which culminates in a sharp focus on the suffering of the virgin mother. This pattern suggests that her involvement in the Passion is to provide the principal perspective from which the further events of the play will be regarded.

Lines 88-90, though spoken by the same character as the previous lines, do not form part of the rhetorical structure of the prologue. Their function is to provide a transition from the contemplative to the dramatic; that is, from a discussion of events to a representation thereof.

Note: Even in a play meant to be read rather than performed, there exists a marked difference between these two aspects; for in a play which is meant to be read, the printed form is a code calling upon the reader to imagine himself "watching a performance". In other words, the printed code instructs the reader to pretend that the text he is reading, is a play in actual performance. The difference between a play being performed and a play being read, then, is only that the code of pretence which applies to the former situation, is in the latter case supplemented by an additional layer of pretence.

Thus in these lines the time of day - just before dawn - is indicated, and the entry of a second character is announced, marking the point where the dialogue commences. (The chorus in this play has a function much more closely resembling that of a third actor, than that of the χοροί of classical tragedy. Although in classical tragedy the chorus - or an individual acting as their mouthpiece - frequently entered into the dialogue in the same manner as the other actors, here the function of the chorus is strictly limited to that type of participation in the action. Accordingly, they are presented as a corporative personality, whose speech is not distinguished from that of the individual characters by any

metrical or dialectal means.)

\* \* \* \* \*

At the beginning of this chapter, the passage to be discussed was called the "proper dramatic prologue" of the play. This definition may still need some explanation.

Note: Tuilier (1969, p.20) describes this passage as a "long monologue qui sert d'introduction dramatique à la pièce", while he uses the term "prologue" in referring to the passage of 30 lines preceding this one.

Firstly, by virtue of its being spoken by one of the characters - in this case the protagonist - this passage is not a preface or introduction, but an integral part of the play. On the other hand, it does not form part of the dialogue, since it is a monologue in the stricter sense of that term, being addressed directly to the reader (or to the audience), while no other characters are present - or, at least, none of the characters is referred to as if being addressed. Bearing these facts in mind, lines 1-87 of the play may be compared to the opening lines of classical tragedies. In that context, the term "prologue" is used when referring to the part of a play - whether monologue or dialogue - preceding the "parodos" or introductory lines of the chorus. In this play, which lacks any part comparable to the lyrical "parodos" of ancient tragedy, the term "prologue" is applicable to the opening lines in as far as the dramatic function of these lines resemble that of the "prologos" of classical tragedy.

An examination of the dramatic function of the prologue in some Euripidean plays may also be of value for the proper interpretation of lines 1-90 of the *Christus patiens*. Therefore, the following series of questions will now be asked, and answers be attempted, with reference to some of the plays which the author used as his poetic sources:

- What form does the prologue take, and why?
- What information is given on the mythological background to the events of the play?

- What information is given on the point where the action commences?
- Who speaks the prologue, and why?
- What emotional appeal is made to the audience?
- What is the basic theme of the prologue, and does this define the essence of the tragic situation?

Firstly then, the form of the prologue: Euripides seems to have preferred a monologue, but showed great diversity in his implementation of this form. In the *Bacchae*, the opening monologue is followed directly by the parodos; or, in other words, the prologue consists of one uninterrupted monologue. The prologue of *Hecabe* consists of two monologues; first the one spoken by the ghost of Polydorus, who leaves the stage when Hecabe enters, and then Hecabe's speech, which is also a monologue in the strict sense of the term, although the implicit stage direction in the text requires the presence of two mute characters on stage. In the *Troades*, Poseidon's monologue is followed by a dialogue between him and the goddess Athene, after which follow the lyrical lines of Hecabe, eventually developing into dialogue between her and the chorus. A similar pattern is found in *Hippolytus*, where the monologue of Aphrodite is followed by a dialogue between Hippolytus and his servant, including a hymn to Artemis by the huntsmen who accompany Hippolytus. In *Medea* the opening monologue of Medea's attendant is followed by a dialogue between her and the tutor. This is interrupted by Medea's first cry of anguish from behind the scene, after which follows another short monologue by the attendant.

Thus, in terms of form, the author of *Christus patiens* had a large variety of examples to choose from. His reasons for preferring a long, uninterrupted monologue will be revealed when some further aspects of the prologue are examined.

Concerning the second question, about the mythological setting of the plays: the prologues of the Trojan plays contain little reference to the legendary cause of the Trojan war, probably because this was the most well-known of all the Greek myths. Instead, in each case an episode is recounted

which has more immediate relevance to the events of the play. In *Hecabe* it is the story of how Priam's youngest son Polydorus was treacherously murdered by his father's guest-friend Polymestor; while in the *Troades* it is the episode of the wooden horse, relevant both because of Athene's part in the victory of the Greeks and because the sacking of Troy immediately precedes the situation at the beginning of that play. In the prologues of both the *Bacchae* and *Medea*, the very beginnings of the underlying myths are recalled, though for different reasons. The negation by Semele's sisters of the supernatural birth of Dionysus provides the main reason for that god's conduct as dramatized in the *Bacchae*; whereas in *Medea* the reference to the Argonauts' expedition as the first source of Medea's troubles, serves to elicit pity for the protagonist on the part of the audience.

In *Christus patiens* the myths are replaced by the history of mankind as it is portrayed in Scripture. Accordingly, from a dramaturgical viewpoint, scriptural events are to the author of the *Christus patiens* what the corpus of Greek myths was to Euripides.

When the prologue of the *Christus patiens* is regarded from this perspective, it reveals how closely the poet followed the example of Euripides' *Medea*; but it also reveals in what respects he went beyond that example, to produce an original work of art. The opening lines recall the very beginning of the underlying "myth", viz. the events in the garden of Eden. Those events are then portrayed as initiating an endless series of troubles, which culminates in the present suffering of the protagonist. Thus the reader (or audience) is led to feel pity for the protagonist, and to be interested in the events of the play, primarily considering the effect these have upon her. Up to this point, the method and result of the author of *Χριστὸς πάσχων* closely resemble those of Euripides in his *Medea*; but the prologues of both these plays go beyond this point, and that is where they differ most conspicuously.

In the *Medea* the second emotion which the prologue is meant

to inspire – next to pity – is that of fear. Thus Medea is portrayed as a frightening person; the audience is led to expect that her reaction to the wrongs she suffers will be terrible. That is partly the reason why Medea herself does not speak the prologue, and why it does not consist of an uninterrupted monologue; Euripides could achieve greater effect by having another character first hint at Medea's awesome nature, before confirming this by her own backstage cries, and eventually by her actions. The protagonist of the *Christus patiens* is to be awe-inspiring in a different way. She is the one who can interpret events which her companions do not understand; who can bring herself to accept the inevitable, even if it is the death of her divine Son; who can overcome her own grief and intercede on behalf of others. But all this is to be revealed as the play proceeds; so the prologue can focus upon inspiring pity – and what better way is there to inspire pity than by presenting to an audience the living embodiment of maternal grief?

Towards the end of the prologue, a more recent event within the "myth" is recalled, viz. the annunciation. This serves the purpose, mainly, of contrasting the great joy which that message provoked to the present grief of the protagonist. Thus it contributes to the heavy emphasis which the entire prologue places upon the suffering of the virgin mother.

These considerations seem to explain the reason for the poet's choice of a monologue by the protagonist. He aimed at focusing attention solely upon her person, in order to elicit – right from the beginning of the play – the highest possible degree of compassion and involvement from the audience.

Note: Even after deciding upon this form of prologue, the author did not make any use of the monologue which forms the prologue of the *Bacchae* of Euripides. The self-assured, challenging spirit which prevails in that monologue simply did not suit his intent. Thus he drew inspiration mainly from the prologue of *Medea*. He would find occasion to draw from the prologue of the *Bacchae* later, at lines 1530 ff. of the *Christus patiens*, where the tone changes from lament to praise as the virgin mother expounds the consequences of Christ's victory over death.

The classical dramatic convention of a prologue referring to the mythological background of the play - either recalling the very beginning of the underlying myth, or recounting a particular episode, or both - resulted in another convention, viz. that of explicitly indicating the precise moment in the course of events at which the dramatic action commences. This necessary item of the prologue is not always introduced with the same measure of success. From a dramaturgical viewpoint, it can be regarded as most acceptable when least conspicuous; that is to say, when the audience is almost unaware of being given this necessary bit of information. Thus in *Hippolytus* the audience learns from the goddess Aphrodite that it is the day of the hero's impending death, at the very moment when his entry is announced. In similar fashion, Dionysus in the *Bacchae* introduces the chorus of Oriental women, inviting them, as it were, to invade the city of Thebes with their music, directly after sketching the probable reaction of Pentheus to the bacchantes. In *Medea* it is revealed early in the prologue that the scene is set in Corinth, where Medea has learned of her husband Jason's treason, without any more specific indication being given; for the audience is to become well acquainted with Medea's character before the moment when she is struck by the final blow, the order of banishment pronounced by Creon.

Note: In both the Trojan plays from which the author of the *Christus patiens* also drew some poetic inspiration - though much less than from the plays discussed above, if this can be measured by counting lines - the description of the sacked city which is given early in the prologue is soon amplified by a more specific indication of time and circumstance. In the *Troades* the audience is told that Hecabe does not yet know of her daughter Polyxena's death. In *Hecabe* the ghost of Polydorus explains his mother's distress as resulting from the vision of him she has seen in a dream, after revealing to the audience that his body is soon to be found and brought to her for burial.)

In the prologue of *Christus patiens* the first indication of specific time and circumstance occurs in line 24, immediately after the identity of the speaking character is made known. Some more indications, though less specific, occur in lines 56-8, 69, and 87. Then, in lines 88-90, the precise time of day is indicated. Note how every one of these indications

coincide with a focusing of attention upon the suffering of the virgin mother, in such a way that their being consciously inserted by the poet goes unnoticed.

Another aspect of these indications, which is important for the characterization of the protagonist, is this: never once in the prologue does she mention that death is part of what her son is to suffer. The content of line 24 is amplified by the parallel ἰδεῖν τ' ἔφριπτον τόνδε καθυβρισμένον in 26. The same thought is expressed in line 69: ὑβρισμένον δὲ τανῶν πῶς οἴσω βλέπειν; - note the verbal repetition. In line 89 - ἰδεῖν τε Παιδὸς ἦν κακωσύνην πάθει - different words are used, but the meaning is essentially the same.

Note: Tuilier translates this line "pour voir la Passion de mon Fils" - showing more piety than accuracy. It should not be forgotten that the supposed time is the morning of the day on which Christ is to be crucified, or rather, of the day on which his mother is to witness his death by crucifixion. Thus the term "Passion" (*sic*) is anachronistic, apart from being much more comprehensive in meaning than what the immediate context requires.

This prepares the way for her rebuke of the chorus in lines 111-9, while together with that passage it serves to explain her reaction to the news that her son is sentenced to death - a reaction which is at first equally perplexing to the chorus and to the reader or audience. The important point to note, however, is that part of the virgin's suffering, and also part of her tragic interest, is her struggle towards a full understanding of the events which she is to witness, and with which she is so deeply involved.

The next question by which a comparison between the plays of Euripides and the *Christus patiens* can be approached, is: who speaks the prologue, and why? This question has already partially been answered regarding the latter play, with reference to the central position of interest which the protagonist is to occupy. However, if the comparison with Euripides is further pursued, it may reveal some more aspects of the poet's method and intent.

In the plays of Euripides, the prologues may be spoken by

Olympians, royals, domestic slaves, or even by apparitions from the world of the deceased. The Olympians normally have foreknowledge of the outcome of events, which they impart to the audience. Thus in the *Bacchae* and in *Hippolytus* we learn from the opening monologue that Pentheus and Hippolytus are to pay for their scornful attitude towards the divine forces involved. There is a marked difference, however, in the poet's presentation of the gods in these two plays: whereas in the *Bacchae* Dionysus becomes the character who dominates the action, in *Hippolytus* the goddess Aphrodite does little more than providing the background to a tragic interplay of human ideals and emotions. Accordingly, the monologue of Dionysus occupies the entire prologue of the *Bacchae*, while in *Hippolytus* the monologue of Aphrodite is followed by the entry of Hippolytus, who reveals himself as a truly fanatical devotee of Artemis, but also provides a transition from the divine to the human world by his disdain of Aphrodite, which implies the same attitude towards all humans who yield to, or even acknowledge, the power of love. Regardless of the particular way in which Euripides in each play represents the gods, though, the prologues spoken by gods do not tend to elicit much pity for the protagonist.

Supernatural foreknowledge is combined with genuine human compassion in the ghost of Polydorus, who speaks the first monologue in *Hecabe*. This monologue is immediately followed by that of the captured queen Hecabe - a monologue which elicits pity for the protagonist if ever Euripides achieved that effect. The fact that in the second half of the play this compassion will be obliterated by the repulsive cruelty of Hecabe's revenge upon Polymestor, does not diminish the effect of the prologue; on the contrary, it reveals a recurring pattern which seems relevant to the comparison between the prologue of the *Christus patiens* and the methods which Euripides applied in the prologues of his plays. In the Euripidean plays where the prologue serves primarily to elicit pity for the protagonist, this is normally replaced by some other emotion in the course of the action. Thus both *Hecabe* and *Medea* contain an act of revenge which cancels pity for the protagonist because it is more wicked than the crime



by which it was provoked. The author of the *Christus patiens* created a similar pattern, also eliciting pity at the beginning of the play and then causing it to be replaced; though the reaction by which pity is replaced differs sharply from that produced in the Euripidean plays. In the *Christus patiens* the protagonist is also the victim of treason; but she prays for divine retribution, not personal revenge. She earns admiration by her concern for others - for the descendants of the Jews, and for Peter, on behalf of whom she begs for pardon - even in the midst of her own grief.

\* \* \*

In sum, then, the point of this section is to demonstrate that a better comprehension and evaluation of the prologue - and, by implication, of the whole - of the *Christus patiens* can be attained by a comparison with the works of Euripides. When regarded from this perspective, the prologue of the *Christus patiens* reveals the extent of the poet's knowledge of Euripides - knowledge not only of his poetical and lexical means of expression, but also of his dramatic method; of the ways in which he combined theme and structure, content and form, into a dramatic work of art. It also reveals with what remarkable measure of success the author copied these methods of the famous tragic poet.

\* \* \* \* \*

EXPOSITION OF LINES 267-357

In these lines the θεοτόκος reacts to the news of Judas' treason. The speech has much in common with the structure of ἀγῶνες (formal judicial debates) in classical Greek tragedy. In fact, it is an imaginary address of the traitor, who is absent (and indeed never appears on stage in this play). That Judas does not enter the scene to speak in his own defence, is due probably to the intention of the author thereby to suggest that his guilt is beyond questioning. It must be admitted that in this way the author missed the opportunity to create a thrilling dramatic clash of opposing forces; but rather than lamenting this loss, one may study the structure and the poetic technique of this speech, in order to discern its own effect and function within the play.

The speech is framed by two short passages (lines 267-8 and 352-7) which serve as reference to the immediate dramatic context in which it is set. The first of these expresses the horror which the mother of Jesus feels upon hearing the news of Judas' treason. The second terminates her address of the traitor, and expresses the hope she has of seeing her son still alive. The use of vocatives, exclamations, and the repetition of verbs (imperatives and optatives) occurring elsewhere in the speech, provides cohesion between this frame and the content of the speech.

The phrase ὦ γαῖα μήτερον ... (267) is the first in a series of vocatives which lends unity to the speech, but which also demarcates the different themes constituting its structure. The others occur at lines 269, 272, 274, 278, 283, 291, 302, 316, 330, 333, 340, 344, 347, and finally, 353. Of these, all but two refer to the traitor; the exceptions are Παῖ (269), and ὦ Παῖ (347). Both of these occur in passages referring to Christ's foreknowledge of the treason, which is contrasted to the ignorance of the other disciples (in the first passage), and of mankind generally (lamented in the second passage). Thus these passages form an inner frame around the charges against the traitor.

The body of the speech, consisting of accusations against Judas, has a twofold structure: the first part (272-300) is emotionally more vehement, while the second part (301-346) commences in a calmer, more reasoned tone.

This structure is comparable to that of Medea's speech (lines 465-519) in the ἀγών scene of the Euripidean *Medea*. There a traitor - Jason - is also being accused by the woman who is most deeply affected by his treason. Like Medea, the θεοτόκος opens her address to the traitor with the words

ὦ παγκάκιστε, τοῦτο γάρ σ' εἰπεῖν ἔχω (272).

The calmer second part of her speech is introduced also, like that of Medea, by the formula

ἐκ τῶνδε πρώτων πρώτον ἄρξομαι λέγειν (301; cf. *Medea* 475).

This is followed, in both works, by a full account of the benefits which the traitor has received from the person whom he has betrayed (Medea herself in the Euripidean play; Jesus in the *Christus patiens*). This account serves to emphasize the audacious nature of the act of treason - the theme being re-introduced in the *Christus patiens* by the formula

καὶ ταῦθ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, παγκάκιστ' ἀνδρῶν, παθῶν,  
προὔδικας αὐτόν (316-7)

which is also taken from the *Medea* of Euripides:

καὶ ταῦθ' ὑφ' ἡμῶν, ὦ κάκιστ' ἀνδρῶν, παθῶν  
προὔδικας ἡμᾶς (488-9).

\* \* \*

Before entering into a more detailed discussion of the structure of this speech, attention should be focused on some poetic features which serve to enhance its emotive effect. Firstly, the horror which the virgin mother feels at the news of Judas' treason - expressed in the adjective ἄρρητος - is confirmed by her reluctance to define the crime. Thus she refers to it vaguely at first, using words like δρᾶμα (269), τῶνδε κακῶν (271), and ταῦτ' ἔδρασας (273a), before defining it in the phrase σὸν προδοῦς εὐεργέτην (273b).

On the semantic level, lines 269-71 form a chiasmic pattern: The crime (δρᾶμα) was committed by the disciple whom Jesus had indicated (ὄν ... ἔδειξας); for He was not unaware (οὐ γὰρ σ' ἔλαθε) of the identity of the criminal (αἴτιος κακῶν).

By means of its *a-b-b-a* arrangement, this passage concerning the foreknowledge of Jesus naturally introduces the address to Judas: *παγκάκιστε* (272) reflects *κακῶν* (271) – a type of *epanastrophe* – while *ἔδρασας* (273), as well as *ἔδρασεν* (275) and *ὁ δράσας* (276), is prefigured by *δρᾶμα* (269).

Note the reiteration of *σύ ... σόν ... σά ...* in lines 273-4. It is reinforced by the initial position which each of these words occupy within their respective phrases, and by the omission of conjunctions. The resulting combination of the figures of *anaphora* and *asyndeton* serve to focus attention on the person of the accused. This is also the function of the rhetorical question in lines 274-5.

The alliteration of *ς* sounds which is present in this passage from line 273 onwards, reaches a crescendo in line 277:

*αἰσχρός τε μύστης ἀξίαν τίσει δίκην.*

In addition to the six occurrences of *ς* sounds in this line, the *τ* sound occurs three times. This sound pattern is typically associated with the expression of disdain.

The syntactic elements of line 276 are arranged in a chiasmic pattern (verb-noun-noun-verb), while containing a striking *antithesis*: the death-wish (*ὄλοιτο*) implies the opposite of *ἐπίσταται*, as the offender (*ὁ δράσας*) is opposed to the principle of justice (*ἡ δίκη*). The contrast between *δράσας* and *δίκη* is further emphasized by alliteration.

In line 277 the parallel arrangement of syntactic elements (adjective-noun-adjective-noun) also supports the *antithesis* between the offender and the retribution. This results in a parallel arrangement of elements in these two lines, *viz.* offender-justice-offender-punishment. Note, however, that the same person is referred to by two different phrases (*ὁ δράσας* and *αἰσχρός μύστης*), while the term *δίκη* refers first to the general principle of justice, then (in 277) to the particular punishment awaiting the traitor.

In line 278 the phrase *συνήδη σὺ δόλω* is given emphasis by the parallel arrangement of alliterating sounds (*σ-δ-σ-δ*).

The rhetorical questions of lines 278-80, arranged in order of increasing length, also have implications of increasing importance. While ποῦ συνήδη σῶ δόλω; (278) merely implies distaste of treacherous actions, line 279 implies that one guilty of such actions should rather die, and line 280 is even more direct and more specific, implying that Judas should hide himself in the dark abyss.

This implication is stated explicitly in lines 281-2, where both the alternatives which are apparently offered to Judas ironically have exactly the same consequence, *viz.* death - emphatically stated in the final word, θανεῖν.

The metonymic (ῶ) μῖσος of line 283 contrasts with ὡς φίλος in 285. This antithesis may have been inconspicuous, were it not supported by *paromoiosis* (parallelism of sound in two clauses equal in size).

The exaggerated formalism of line 284 is purely ironical, since its content refers to the basest of actions imaginable. The effect of this line is enhanced by its sound pattern: the word endings in -ην -ην -αν -αν, the repetition of τ, δ, σ, and π, and the juxtaposition of Δεσπότην and προδοῦσαν, which is emphasized by the chiastic sound pattern δ-π-π-δ.

The figure of *asyndeton* is noticeable in the passage 283-9. Combined with *epanaphora* (ῶ ... ῶ ... in 283; ἦλθες ... ἦλθες in 286) and *anadiplosis* (πῶς πῶς ... πῶς in 288), it adds to the staccato effect of the whole. The passage contains some other stylistic devices too, e.g. the *chiasmus* in lines 285-6 (προσελθεῖν - ἦλθες πρόσ), and the parallelism in 288-9:

πῶς πῶς — προσεῖπας;

γλώσση — προσηύδας.

The obvious and apparently redundant answer to πῶς προσεῖπας; *viz.* γλώσση, gains its specific meaning from the *antithesis* γλώσση - καρδίῃ (289).

Note also the frequency of alliteration in this passage - especially in line 288, where five out of six words begin in π, resulting in seven occurrences of this sound, while ε occurs eight times in the very same twelve-syllable line.

The next passage contains an interesting *chiasmus*:

προσβλέπειν — τολμᾶς (290-1)  
τολμᾶν — προσβλέπειν (293)

Once again – as in the case of *δίκη* in lines 276-7 – the repetition of a word coincides with a difference in meaning or reference. Thus *προσβλέπειν* in 290 is used figuratively, while the same word in 293 is used in its literal sense. This is verified by the respective objects of *προσβλέπειν*, *viz.* ἥλιόν τε ... καὶ γαῖαν in 290-1; εὐεργέτην in 293.

The first usage of *προσβλέπειν* echoes an earlier passage, lines 278-82, as is evident from the repetition of phrases:

εἰσέτι ζῆς ταῦτ' εἰργασμένος (279)  
ταῦτα δράσας (προσβλέπειν) τολμᾶς εἰσέτι (290-1)

Moreover, in the phrase ἥλιόν τε ... καὶ γαῖαν (290-1) may be heard an echo of γῆς ... κάτω (281) and πυρός ... αἰθέρος (282).

The second occurrence of *προσβλέπειν* (293) is in a passage dealing with shame and audacity, and which echoes the theme of lines 283-9. In this context, *προσβλέπειν* functions on the same level as (ἔτλης) προσελθεῖν (285), προσεῖπας (288), and προσηύδας (289).

The θεοτόκος ends the first part of this speech by motivating her address of the traitor. The *antithesis* of lines 298-9 is expressed in two phrases which are parallel in terms of their syntactic arrangement (an example of *parison*):

ἐγώ τε — λέξασα — κουφισθήσομαι  
σύ τε — κού κλύων — μάθης.

Line 300 gives an explanation of this last word – μάθης – and focuses attention on it by the figure of *epanastrophe*: μάθης· μάθης γάρ ...

The content of εὐρών (line 300) is emphasized by the sound pattern of the line (the word endings -ων -ην -αν -ιν) and by its repetition – almost *verbatim* – of the thought expressed already in line 277: αἰσχρός τε μύστης ἀξίαν τίσει δίκην.

\* \* \*

The θεοτόκος begins the second part of her speech by listing the benefits which Judas has received from Jesus. This list consists of seven items – or rather, seven syntactical units, strung together without the use of conjunctions. *Asyndeton* may become tiresome when used so extensively; but this danger is avoided by varying the length of the different units:

εἴλκυσεν ἐκ σκότους σε τῆς ἀγνωσίας,  
ἔσωσέ σ’,

ὑπέδειξε φῶς σωτηρίας·

δέδωκέ σοι χάρισμα πολλῶν θαυμάτων·

μύσταίς ἔφησε καὶ σὲ συνεδριάσαι κρίναί τε φυλάς Ἰσραὴλ ...

ἔθηκεν ἀργύρια πάντα χερσὶ σου,

ἔκοπέ σου πρόφασιν ἀναργυρίας. (303-309)

Thus the first, fourth, sixth and seventh unit each fills one trimeter line; the second and third taken together fill one line; and the fifth is extended to the length of two lines. On the semantic level, the third syntactic unit expresses the same thought as the second, while the semantic content of the last unit is a logical corollary of the preceding statement. The *antithesis* between lines 303 and 304 is underlined by syntactic parallelism:

ἐκ σκότους — τῆς ἀγνωσίας

φῶς — — σωτηρίας

This is further supported by parallelism in sound: by *paronomiosis* (ἀγνωσίας - σωτηρίας) as well as the alliteration of *ς* sounds in these two lines.

The figure of *kuklos* occurs in line 304, where ἔσωσε in the initial position of the first clause is synonymous with σωτηρίας in the final position of the second clause.

Note how all the syntactic units but one in this passage have their verb in the initial position. This adds to the surprise effect of line 310, which also commences in a verb, without any conjunction – thus creating the impression that it is a continuation of the list – but the statement refers to what Judas has always been doing, not to what Jesus has done.

After this interruption, the θεοτόκος continues her account of the benefits which Judas has received, though in a different style. From line 311 onwards, the statements are

extended by adverbial or participial clauses, or both, and conjunctions are employed between the syntactic units.

The account culminates in the statement in line 315, which is emphasized by its sound pattern (τ occurs six times in this line) and also by the *antithesis* between the attributes *δυσμενεστάτους* and *μυστικωτάτου*. This in itself gains effect from the chiastic arrangement (adjective-noun-noun-adjective) and from the similar sound pattern of these two adjectives.

Note the use of the adjective *δυσμενεστάτους* in line 314. It is syntactically dependent upon *πόδας*, though expressing an attribute of Judas himself, not of his feet. (Cf lines 274-5: *τίς γὰρ ἂν ἄλλος ποτὲ ἔδρασεν ἢ βούλευσε δυσμενῆς ἀνὴρ;*) This is an instance of the figure known as *hypallage*.

The contrast between what Judas has received and what he has done, is highlighted in lines 316-8, by the following means:

- the juxtaposition of *παθῶν* (316) and *προὔδωκας* (317);
- the alliteration of key words commencing in π (*παγκάκιστε, παθῶν, προὔδωκας, πολλῶν, and προσόντων*);
- the chiastic arrangement of the antithetical statements *προὔδωκας αὐτόν* and *δῶρα δ' ἐκτίσω* (317).

By means of the participial clause *πολλῶν προσόντων* (318) a new theme is introduced: Judas had no reason for betraying Jesus. Had he been penniless, he would have had a reason to yearn for money (*λαβὴν ἂν εἶχας ...*); but now he has none (*οὐκ ἔχεις πρόφασιν*). Note the chiastic arrangement of the syntactic elements (noun-verb-verb-noun) by which this antithesis is given more emphasis.

Note: The term *λαβὴ* (319) is used in a figurative sense; but this usage is quite rare. That the author himself regarded it as a novel expression, may be deduced from his insertion of a defining genitive - *δράματος* - in line 146, where *λαβὴ* first occurs in this sense. The impact of this figurative usage is due to its being unconventional - that is, to the tension a reader notices between the usual and the unusual.

Through the association of ideas, the theme of Judas having no reason for betraying his master is developed into the closely related theme of the innocence of Jesus. This line



of development may be traced through the nouns λαβή (319), πρόφασις (320), λόγος (320), and αἰτία (321), all of which occur in the same syntactic function. In terms of poetic technique, they are bound together by the following means:

- by *chiasmus*: λαβήν-εἶχες-ἔχεις-πρόφασιν,
- by *epanaphora*: οὐκ ἔχεις πρόφασιν, οὐκ ἔχεις λόγον, and
- by syntactic parallelism: ἔχεις λόγον - κατειπεῖν αἰτίαν.

In terms of the meaning of these nouns, they are linked to one another on the basis of synonymity, or shared semantic features: λαβή here signifies a reason or motive; whereas πρόφασις is an excuse or alleged reason; the communicative component in the meaning of πρόφασις is obviously present too in the meaning of λόγος; and finally, both λόγος and αἰτία can mean "reason", while both can also mean "accusation". It seems that the author intended this ambiguity, since at first glance the meaning "reason" perfectly fits the context, while the following passage (lines 322-6) makes sense only if τοσοῦτον in 322 refers to κατειπεῖν αἰτίαν meaning "formulate a (just) accusation".

Line 324 - καὶ γῆν ἅπασαν ῥημάτων πλήσῃ κακῶν - recalls by contrast the content of line 213 - πλήσει τε πᾶσαν γαίαν εὐδόξων λόγων - suggesting that the triumph of Christ over evil is unimpaired. Not even a combined effort of the forces of darkness, encompassing the whole earth, could produce any just accusation against Jesus; for all of creation is aware of his excellence (line 325).

The parallel statements of lines 325-6 are arranged in a chiasmatic pattern:

ἐπίσταται	κτίσις
πάντες	ἐγνώρισαν

The primary function of this type of semantic parallelism, where both statements express similar content, is to give emphasis. However, in a text restricted by the bounds of the iambic metre, this figure enables the author to fuse elements of two syntactic units into one semantic unit. Thus in this passage the object of ἐπίσταται, viz. μιν ἐσθλὸν ὄντ(α), is obviously to be understood as the object of ἐγνώρισαν also. The phrase ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων (326) probably also belongs to both statements.

The frequently recurring contrast between words and deeds – between λόγος and ἔργον – is once again effectively employed in this passage. Here the contrast is expressed by the terms ῥῆμα and πρᾶγμα. The fact that both occur in their genitive plural form – ῥημάτων (324) and πραγμάτων (326) – results in a parallel sound pattern which serves to highlight this contrast: the words of the demons can not disprove the deeds which reveal the greatness of Christ.

In lines 327-8 the real reason for Judas' treason is defined as φιλαργυρία, "which is the root of all evil". Note the emphatic alliteration of κ and π sounds in 328. The thought itself is not original; cf. I Tim 6.10, and Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, 4.1: ἀρχὴ δὲ πάντων χαλεπῶν φιλαργυρία.

The metaphoric ἤρξεν ἀρχόνη σε (line 327) may be an allusion to the death of Judas as described in Mt 27.5: καὶ ῥίψας τὰ ἀργύρια εἰς τὸν ναὸν ἀνεχώρησεν, καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἀπήρξατο. If this is a deliberate allusion, it seems to imply a direct link between Judas' vice and his ruin.

Alliteration is prominent again in line 330, which recalls a theme expounded already in 290-1: after what Judas has done, it is nothing but audacity even to live any longer. In the next two lines, the rhetorical questions suggest the nature of this audacity: Judas either thinks that God does not rule any more, or he thinks that justice has lost all effect. Both these alternatives imply essentially the same, viz. that he expects to escape with impunity. The rhetorical technique is worth noting: by feigning a choice between two possibilities, which are in reality almost identical, the point is made that both are equally true. The same technique was used in lines 281-2, where, incidentally, the conjunctions ἢ ... ἢ ... were also employed to introduce the alternatives.

In the next passage (lines 333-9) the θεοτόκος declares Judas to be an inhuman monster, born neither of man nor of God. (Cf. Jn 1.13.) The first of these statements contains metaphoric language drawn from the biological world (ἔρνος, ῥίζα, and ἐκπεφυκέναι) which explains the phrase ὅσα τε γῆ τρέφει κακά in 336. It does not seem to reflect a gnostic cosmology.

The second statement is syntactically parallel to the first:

οὐ γὰρ ἐρῶ ποτ' ἐκ θεοῦ φῦναί σ' ἐγώ (337)

οὔποτ' εἶ ... πικρῶν δὲ ῥιζῶν φημί σ' ἐκπεφυκέναι (333-4)

However, different types of extensions are added to these two complementary statements:

The first is followed simply by a list of the πικραὶ ῥίζαι from which Judas is said to have sprung. Note the emphasis given to the items in this list, firstly, by the chiasmic arrangement of line 335 (ἀλάστορος - πρῶτον - εἶτα - φθόνου) and, secondly, by the assonance in φθόνου, φόνου, πότμου. (For a similar list, in the same style, cf. Rom 1.29.)

The second statement is followed by a logical explanation: though everything is within the plan of God, He does not save any person against his will.

In lines 340-1 Judas is once more confronted with the horror of his crime. The repetition of vocatives in 340, extending to the full trimeter line, marks the end of the calmer tone which has prevailed since line 302. Incidentally, the name of the traitor occurs only once in this entire speech: Ἰούδα in 302, which marks the moment when the θεοτόκος deliberately changes her tone from heated argument to reasoned discussion. This seems to reflect the intention of the author, to suggest that only at that moment could the θεοτόκος bring herself to utter the name of the person whom she elsewhere addresses in terms ranging from ἀργυραμοιβέ to παγκράκιστε καὶ μαιφόνε.

The pun involving the verbs πράσσω and πιπράσκω in line 341 is made more striking through the use of the perfect forms πέπραχας and πεπρακώς, resulting in *paronomiosis*, as well as by the juxtaposition of these forms at the *caesura*.

Note: Regarding the metre of this line, we may note that ε before a *muta cum liquida* is used as short in πέπραχας, while long in πεπρακώς, and that the long α occurring in the stem of both these verbs is treated as if it were short in the case of πεπρακώς. To some scholars the immediate proximity of these inconsistencies may indicate an insensitivity to prosody on the part of the author. However, it may also be regarded as indicating, simply, that the author was more concerned with implementing effective rhetorical techniques than with writing trimeter lines which scan correctly. In other words, it does not necessarily mean that the author was ignorant regarding the finer details of metrical practice.

As in lines 272-7, the explicit definition of Judas' crime in 341 (πεπρακῶς εὐεργέτην) is immediately followed by a wish that he may be punished: Αὐτός σ(ε) ... πρόρριζον ἐκτρίψειεν ... (342-3). This seems to be a key feature in the structure of the speech. The parallelism (both syntactic and semantic) between lines 273 and 341 is notable:

σύ ταῦτ' ἔδρασας, σὸν προδοῦς εὐεργέτην· (273)

οἶον πέπραχας, πεπρακῶς εὐεργέτην; (341)

In fact, these lines would have been fully interchangeable, were it not for the following considerations:

- 1) The sound pattern of 273, with the alliteration of σ and δ sounds, fits better into the context of 272-7.
- 2) The demonstrative ταῦτ(α) suits the context where the first definition of the crime is given, while οἶον includes a reference to the implications of the crime.
- 3) While προδοῦς εὐεργέτην gives a precise definition of the immoral nature of the crime, the monetary connotation in πεπρακῶς εὐεργέτην is more in place after the references to ἀργύρια (308), ἀναργυρία (309), and φιλαργυρία (327).

In contrast to the motivation of her address of the traitor in lines 295b-300, the θεοτόκος now terminates this address in words expressing her absolute disgust:

Ἔρρ', αἰσχροποιέ, φιλίας διαφθορεῦ·

ἀπέπτυσ' οὐδ' ἀπόντι σοι δεῖ συλλαλεῖν·

τὸν γὰρ δόλιον καὶ θεὸς βδελύσσεται. (344-6)

Lines 347-50 is a direct quotation from Euripides' *Medea* (516-9), in which only the vocative ὦ Ζεῦ (516) is replaced by ὦ Παῦ. To this passage is added the words

ἀλλ' αὐτὸς εἰδῶς, ἀγνοεῖν πάντα θέλεις (351)

If this is to be read as a question, it is a rather dull and pointless repetition of the preceding rhetorical question. If, however, it is read as a statement, it marks a change of tone which suits the context: from an almost rebellious inquiry, prompted by the reference to τὸν δόλιον (346), the tone of the θεοτόκος changes to acceptance and resignation.

Note: The change from σώματι (*Medea* 519) to σώματος seems to be of minor importance, only involving the construction of σῶμα with χαρακτήρ rather than with ἐμπέφυκε.

The concluding lines (352-7) lead the attention of the reader - or audience - back to the dramatic situation which has occasioned the speech. After a short series of exclamations which sum up the feelings of the θεοτόκος regarding the traitor, there follows a passage in which she expresses the hope nevertheless to see her son still alive. Note the effective use of figures like *anadiplosis* (ὄλοιτ' ὄλοιτο and ἔρρ' ἔρρε) and *asyndeton*. The main trends of the entire speech are echoed in these lines, by the choice of words:

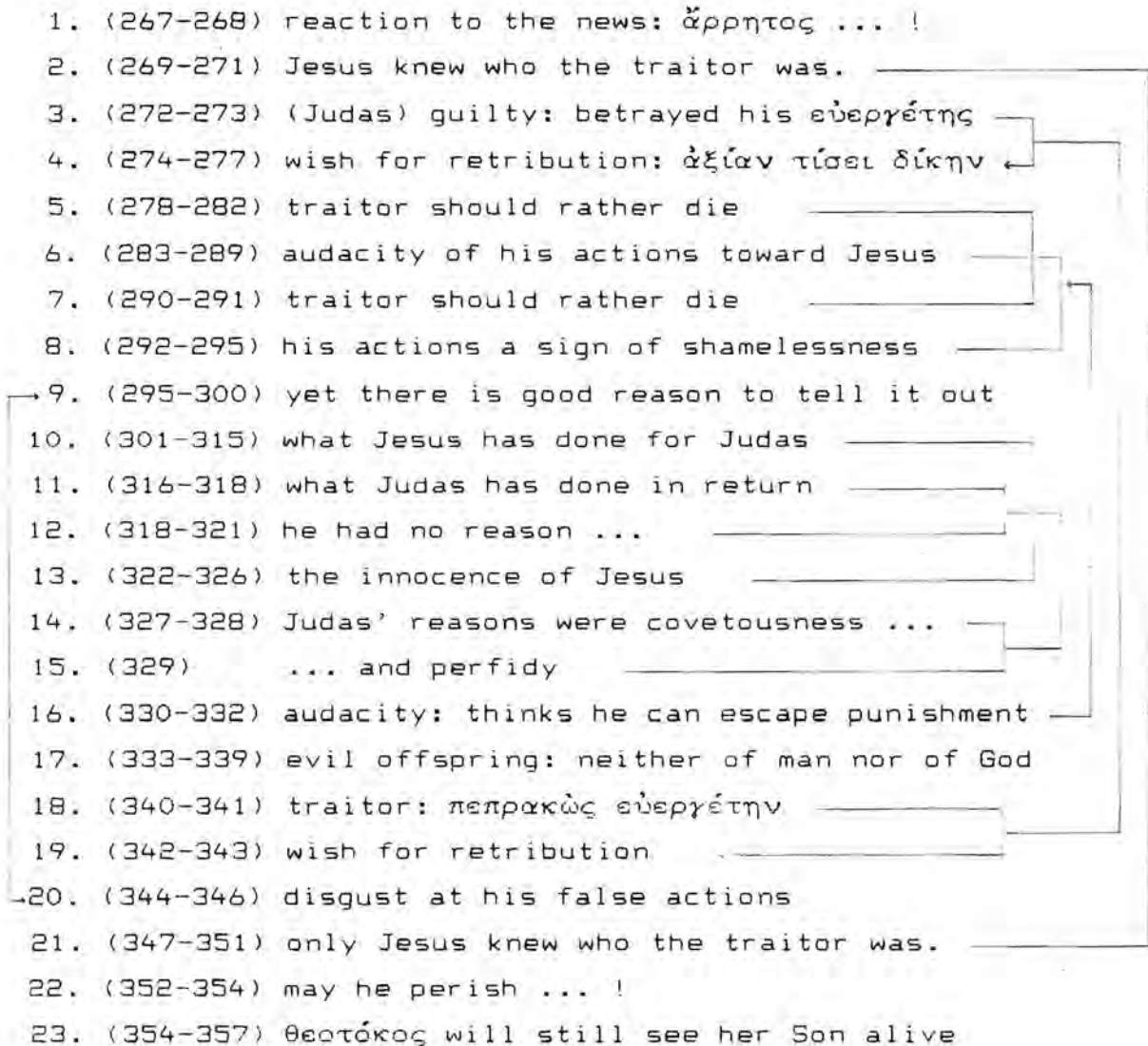
- ὄλοιτο (352) recalls ὄλοιθ' ὁ δράσας (276);
- ἔρρε (353) repeats the same word in 344;
- πανδίκως suggests a just retribution, as did the phrases ἀξίαν τίσει δίκην (277) and εὐρών τὴν κατ' ἀξίαν τίσιν (300);
- κακουργάτης recalls αἴτιος κακῶν (271) as well as (possibly) ταῦτ' εἰργασμένος (279);
- παγκάκιστε καὶ μαιφόνε (353) reflects the vocatives of lines 272, 291, 316, and 340.

The transition from this death wish to the hope of life is marked by *hiatus* (354), which rarely occurs in the play.

\* \* \*

At the beginning of this chapter, reference was made to a twofold structure, as well as passages forming an inner and outer frame around the speech. These terms, obviously, are not to be regarded as implying that the "structure" of the speech is a tangible or visible entity. On the contrary, it should be remembered that the reader or audience experiences a dramatic monologue as a communicative event progressing irreversibly (in temporal terms) from beginning to end. Yet the attentive reader, or the involved spectator, is bound to discern the succession and repetition of related (similar or contrastive) sounds, phrases and themes. These are entrusted to memory, not as an exact replica of the experience, but as an interpreted version which influences his reception of the speech (or the entire play) as it continues. A description of the "structure" of a speech (or play), therefore, is nothing but a documented record of this interpretive process. Whether it is presented in discursive or diagrammatic form, or both, is simply a matter of preference.

The thematic structure of this speech of the θεοτόκος can be represented by the following diagram:



Regarding the mutual relations between the structural units shown in this diagram, the following may be noted:

The passages concerning the foreknowledge of Jesus (2 and 21) are related not only through their common theme, but also by means of the vocatives Παῦ (line 269) and ὦ Παῦ (347). Though the latter passage (lines 347-51) consists almost entirely of lines borrowed from the *Medea* of Euripides, its function in the structure of this speech was deliberately planned by the author, as may reasonably be concluded from the introduction of this theme at lines 269-71 already.

Since the main body of the speech is modelled partly on the speech of Medea (465-519) in the Euripidean play, the first series of accusations (units 3-8) is concluded by a passage motivating the address of the traitor (unit 9). This passage facilitates the transition to a calmer, more reasoned account of the full implications of the crime. But since Judas is not present to answer these charges, the second part of the speech (units 10-19) is terminated by a passage expressing disgust and total rejection of the criminal (unit 20).

Note: When the θεοτόκος addresses Judas again after this, it is only in the strongest terms of absolute rejection:  
ἔρρ' ἔρρε, παγκάκιστε καὶ μαιφόνε, ὄλοι(ο) (lines 353-4)

Immediately after the definition of Judas' crime (3), the θεοτόκος expresses a wish for retribution (4). An identical sequence occurs near the end of the speech (18 and 19). The repetition of εὐσεργέτην as the object of a verb denoting the treason, serves to underline the relation between these two passages. Note, however, that the wish for divine retribution is expressed in much stronger terms in the second passage:

αὐτό(ς) σ(ε) ... πρόρριζον ἐκτρίψειεν οὐτάσας πυρί (342-3)

The themes expounded in units 5-8 are interrelated by their parallel arrangement. These may be summarized as follows: One who has shown the audacity and shamelessness of Judas, should rather not live. This theme recurs at lines 330-2 (unit 16). The attentive reader cannot miss the hint that Judas should anticipate the divine retribution which is inevitable. This seems to be an allusion to his suicide, as it is announced in lines 231-5, and reported in 1427-32.

Units 10-15 are also arranged in a parallel pattern. After all the good deeds Jesus has done (10), Judas rewarded him with treason, though he could not even claim ἀναργυρία as an excuse (11-12); everyone knows that Jesus is innocent (13); so Judas betrayed him only because of his own φιλαργυρία and faithlessness (14-15).

\* \* \*

In conclusion, a few words may be said about the dramatic function of this speech. It has been said already that the speech contains the reaction of the θεοτόκος to the news of Judas' treason. This occurs at a point in the play when she has not yet come to grips with the fact that her divine son has to die to fulfil his mission. Thus the news comes as a shock to her, not primarily because Judas' treason will lead to her son's death, but because of the unimaginable ὕβρις involved in betraying the divine εὐεργέτης.

When this is kept in mind, it is possible to appreciate fully the importance of this speech for the dramatic portrayal both of the θεοτόκος and of Jesus. Firstly, the θεοτόκος: she is characterized as simply human, lacking the divine insight which she acknowledges in Jesus, and prone to react in a way which is typical of any human mother whose son is betrayed by a trusted person. Jesus, on the other hand, is seen as the divine Son:

- the one who knew beforehand who the traitor was (269-71);
  - the Δεσπότης (284) and Διδάσκαλος (285);
  - the Saviour (304) and miracle worker (305);
  - the supreme Judge (306-7);
  - πανάγαθος (311) and ἐσθλός (325), as all of creation knows.
- Consequently, it is understandable that his mother finds it very difficult to accept that he has to die. She has said so before this speech, in 111-9; and she will say so again, in lines 423-7.

In the light of all this, it becomes clear that the author has deliberately framed the entire speech by the two passages concerning the foreknowledge of Jesus. He planned to mirror Judas' treason against the background of the divine nature of Christ, in order to underline in this way too the mystery of salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ.

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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 τολμηρίᾳ), 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 ἀρνίον 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 ῥομφαίαι (1477 C)

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

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

τὴν ταῖς ἀπείροις τοῦ πάθους προτετρωμένην ῥομφαίαις (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' ἀπεζύγης 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 μητρός, 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 ἐκτραγωδῆσαι 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 ἐκτραγωδῆσαι and λόγον ἐξελπεῖν 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.

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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 τῆ μεγάλης παρασκευῆ 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, ἢ 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 ἢ 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, ἢ 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 "Αἰδου 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 συνεταὶ ῥυθμηθεῖσαι  
 προέπεμψαν, ὡς οἶμαι, τὴν Μαγδαληνὴν Μαρίαν  
 ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον, ὡς λέγει ὁ Θεολόγος.

Ἦν δὲ σκοτία, ἀλλ' ἐκείνην πόθος κατέλαμπεν·  
 ὅθεν 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 ἦσαν τὸν Κύριόν μου;

Οἱ φρουροὶ γὰρ οὐ φαίνονται, ἀλλ' ἔφυγον· μὴ ἐγήγερται  
 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' οὖν 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. 'Ελθ' 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
<b>ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ</b>	
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 κουστωδιά 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.

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## 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.

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