

**SOME REMARKS ON THE REAL AUTHOR / AUTHORS OF THE
PASSIO SANCTI ANDREAE APOSTOLI (i.e. *THE LATIN EPISTLE*),
THE 6th CENTURY A.D.**

**НЯКОИ БЕЛЕЖКИ ОТНОСНО ИСТИНСКИЯ АВТОР/АВТОРИ НА
PASSIO SANCTI ANDREAE APOSTOLI
(*ЛАТИНСКО ПОСЛАНИЕ*) (VI ВЕК)**

The oldest Latin reworking of the primitive Acts of Andrew is *Passio Sancti Andreae Apostoli*, i.e. the *Latin Epistle* – the 6th century A.D. J. Flamion has ascribed it to one of the African Catholic theologians exiled in Sardinia Island together with Bishop Fulgentius of Ruspe. Nevertheless, this identification is rather implausible.

Another possible author could be one of the Scythian monks of the 6th century. The comparison of the theological thought of the Latin Epistle with that of the Scythian works refutes even this last supposition. The theological thought of the Latin Epistle suggests that its real author was a Western Catholic. He tried to imitate the Eastern theologians. Moreover, it seems that he had even met an Eastern theologian who taught him few Eastern theological thoughts.

Keywords: Acts of Andrew, Latin Epistle, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Scythian monks, hypostatic union.

There are many ancient writings about Andrew the Apostle. Most of them had as common source an apocryphal writing – *the primitive Acts of Andrew* (=AA) dating from the second half of the 2nd century A.D. (Roig Lanzillotta 2007: passim).

Due to the heretic ideas existing in *the primitive Acts*, the Catholic Church of the first centuries – both in the East and in the West – refused to accept the original text. In the same time, intending to offer a harmless version of AA, its theologians eliminated the heretic ideas from the primitive text. The result was new recensions, more or less removed from *the primitive Acts*.

One of the ancient Catholic texts preserved today is *Passio sancti Andreae apostoli*, i.e. the *Latin epistle* (=LatEp) (Bonnet 1898: 1-37). It was composed at the beginning of the 6th century A.D., in the West (Flamion 1911: 40). It is the oldest Latin reworking of AA known today. Its text has been preserved in three recensions: one in Latin and two in Greek. The Latin text is the original one. The others are two independent Greek translations (Bonnet 1894: 458-469).

This investigation has been focused on the issue of the real author of *LatEp*. The main purpose is a critical examination of the possibility that its author has been one of the Scythian monks of the 6th century.

The Identification of the Real Author

The *LatEp* has been similar to an encyclical letter. Its author tried to offer a text entirely conform to the official teaching of the Church. The main purpose of his work was a

liturgical one, i.e. the use of the text in the religious services in honour of the apostle (Flamion 1911: 12, 43). To increase the value of his work, he put the text on account of the priests and deacons of the Church of Achaia, eye witnesses of Andrew's martyrdom (Bonnet 1898: 1.2-3; 3.1).

The *Epistle* has two parts. The first one – chapters 1-9 – has a dogmatic and moral character. It is an original composition of the *Epistle's* author (Lipsius 1883: 589; Flamion 1911: 41, 115-116; Prieur 1989: 13; Roig Lanzillotta 2007: 6, 31, n. 311, 58).

The second part – chapters 10-15 – is similar to other old recensions. It offers a brief version of Andrew's martyrdom. The author has used for this part a previous recension of the *AA*.

The first part of the *Epistle* allows some remarks about its real author. The only scholar that has tried to identify him is J. Flamion (Flamion 1911: 38-42). Analyzing the theological thought of the *Epistle* and the features of the Latin used, he has concluded that its real author was one of the African Catholics exiled together with bishop Fulgentius of Ruspe on Sardinia Island¹.

However, Flamion (Flamion 1911: 15) has revealed that there are some dogmatic thoughts that come in conflict with his conclusion. The first one is the Trinitarian formula at the beginning of the work, i.e. *the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and remains in the Son*².

Trying to explain this Eastern influence in the *Epistle*, Flamion has presumed that the real author tried to strengthen the authenticity of his work in the eye of his Western contemporaries as a work of Greek theologians, i.e. the priest and deacons of the Church of Achaia (Flamion 1911: 15-16).

The second counterargument is the manner used by the author when he refers to the hypostatic union of the two natures – divine and human – of Jesus Christ (Bonnet 1898: 11.8; 12. 1-2)³. In Flamion's view, that paragraph indicates either the author's clumsiness in theological vocabulary or another attempt to imitate the Eastern theologians involved in the disputes regarding the hypostatic union (Flamion 1911: 25-26).

Flamion's identification of the *Epistle's* author is rather implausible. The main impediment is the Trinitarian formula used at the beginning of the *Epistle*. It has to be noted that Fulgentius of Ruspe, in whose environment Flamion has identified the *Epistle's* author, professed *Filioque* (Fulgentius: 674^B; 675^B; 675^C; 676^C; 696^B), i.e. the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. He also enjoined the believers to hold this faith and even asserted that it had prophetic and apostolic basis (Fulgentius: 696^C)⁴. Fulgentius was also full of convictions that personal salvation was possible only in the Catholic Church and by confessing its faith (Fulgentius: 671^B-673^A; 704^{AB}; 705^D-706^A).

Therefore, it is hardly probable that in Fulgentius' environment someone would have written a work destined to be read during the liturgical services, teaching the remaining of the Holy Spirit in the Son. Such a faith would have stirred confusion among Western Catholic believers.

The Scythian monks and the *Latin Epistle*

J. Flamion has connected the *LatEp* with the Scythian monks too. Trying to explain how the Eastern Trinitarian formula penetrated in the *LatEp*, he referred to the relations that existed between the African exiles in Sardinia and the Scythian monks (Flamion 1911: 16). Afterwards, looking for the translators of the *Epistle* into Greek, he also appealed to the Scythian monks, considering them potential translators (Flamion 1911: 42).

In his turn, another scholar, M. Dufourcq, examining the Western *Vitae sanctorum* written during the same period, concluded that some of them originated in the environment of the Scythian monks, of the exiles in Sardinia and of their Gaul and Roman friends (Dufourcq 1907: 205).

These remarks have raised the question regarding the possibility that one of the Scythian monks was the real author of the *Latin epistle*. This issue would not be exaggerated if someone has taken in account its Trinitarian formula and the interest of the real author in the two natures of Jesus Christ and in their hypostatic union.

The Scythian monks⁵ originated in Scythia Minor (today's Dobruja, in Romania and Bulgaria), an Eastern province in the diocese of Thrace. During the reign of the emperors Justin I (518–527) and Justinian I (527–565), they were directly involved in the theological disputes concerning the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ's two natures. Their main purpose was to eliminate the Nestorian interpretation of the dogmatic definitions of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Therefore, they provided a theological formula – *Unus ex Trinitate passus est carne*, i.e. *One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh* – trying to obtain its official recognition by the ecumenical Church.

In the early months of 519, some Scythian monks travelled to Constantinople. The patriarch John II (518–520) and the papal legates in Constantinople refused to approve their theological formula. Therefore, some of them travelled to Rome. They stayed there fourteen months, from July 519 to August 520. They were received by Pope Hormisdas (514–523). They were in correspondence with the African Catholics exiled in Sardinia, held public speeches in Rome explaining their theological formula. They obtained the sympathy of the Roman population, of the senior officials of the city, of the exiled African Catholics. But Pope Hormisdas refused to officially approve their formula. After all, the pope decided their moving off from Rome.

Eventually, the Scythian formula was accepted both in the East and in the West and was officially approved by the second Council of Constantinople (553)⁶.

Both in Constantinople and in Rome, the Scythian monks wrote some works (Glorie 1978: 5-172), all in Latin, the language they used, promoting their theological thought.

This Scythian monks' profile seems to suite to *Epistle's* author. They were Eastern theologians and originated in a province, i.e. Scythia Minor, where both Greek and Latin were spoken. They spoke Latin and wrote their works in this language. They were involved in the theological disputes regarding the hypostatic union.

Therefore, the authorship of *LatEp* could be ascribed to these Eastern monks. The comparison of *LatEp* and some Scythian writings allows the solving of the issue.

a. The Trinitarian Formula of *EpLat* and the Scythian monks

It is obvious that the Trinitarian formula at the beginning of the *LatEp* has Eastern origins, as the scholars have agreed (Tillemont 1693: 621; Lipsius 1883: 564-565; Bonnet 1894: 465; Flamion 1911: 15-16; Piñero 2004: 115). A similar thought was maintained into the writings by St. Basil the Great (d. 379)⁷, Didymus the Blind (d. 398) (Didymus: 425-426^A) or, afterwards, St. John of Damascus (d. 749) (Joannes Damascenus: 805^B).

In their works, the Scythian monks did not assert a clear confession regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit and never clearly asserted the remaining of the Holy Spirit in the Son. It is even more difficult to find their confession regarding this issue since they accepted the official documents of the second ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 381) (Glorie 1978: 22.342-343; 164.183-184) and even quoted the Nicene Creed (Glorie 1978: 103.950-951)⁸, in which the *Filioque* does not exist, and, at the same time, quoted the writings of Augustine of Hippo⁹ and the *Quicumque Vult*, i.e. the Athanasian Creed (Glorie 1978: 33.1-2; 69.511-512; 106.1044)¹⁰, where the *Filioque* is mentioned.

There are few passages in John Maxentius' works referring to Saint Trinity (Glorie 1978: 8.89-9.90; 33.1-2, 4-10; 39.1-3; 46. 84-86; 99.796-797, 807; 100.828). Only one of them allows advancement in understanding his thought about the personal features of the Holy Spirit and His being source. Referring in short to the begetting of the Son and proceeding of the Holy Spirit, Maxentius asserted that these had been accomplished in a similar way (*similiter*) from another – *ex aliquo*. Few lines below, he also asserted that the Son and the Holy Spirit had had only one source – *alter ... ex altero*, i.e. the Father (Glorie 1978: 103.958-953; 104.961-962, 967-968).

As regards to the remaining of the Holy Spirit in the Son, it could be deduced from another Maxentius' reference. He asserted that *the Father dwells in the Son, as the Son himself dwells in the Father, and the Holy Spirit is not separated from them*¹¹. The *Epistle's* author himself had maintained *the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Father and in the Son* as a consequence of *the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father and His remaining in the Son*¹². Thus, these two believes, i.e. *the remaining of the Holy Spirit in the Son and His presence in the Father and in the Son*, were very closely related and, in this case, their source obviously was the Eastern theology regarding the relationships between Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the godhead (Didymus: 425-426^A; Cyrillus: 417^C).

Therefore, it could be said that the Trinitarian thought of these writings – the *LatEp* and the Scythian works – were in accord with each other and differed from the Western theology of this issue. But this is not a clear proof that the *Epistle's* author was one of the Scythian monks.

b. The Hypostatic Union of Christ's Natures in *EpLat* and the Thought of the Scythian Monks

The second important thought that links the *EpLat* with the theological interest of the Scythian monks is the issue of the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures. The *Epistle's* author stressed the divinity of Jesus Christ and His humanity few times¹³.

The most important passage¹⁴ is obviously that which closes a dialog concerning the mystery of the cross (Chapters 2-5; Bonnet 1898: 3-12). It contains the essential features of the hypostatic union. The author asserts the human nature of Jesus Christ and his crucifixion as a man. The One who saved the human race is a perfect man – *perfectus homo*. He was born of an unstained Virgin – *de immaculata uirgine natus*, i.e. the Holy Virgin Mary. This man extended his unstained hands on the cross. Therefore, human nature was crucified and died. In this respect, the paragraph mirrors the Scythian thought *passus est carne*.

As regards to the divine nature, the author maintains that Jesus Christ is the Son of God too. As Son of God, he made the first man.

It is the only paragraph of *LatEp* regarding the hypostatic union which maintained the human nature of Jesus Christ alongside with His divinity. But the *Epistle's* author asserts the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ's natures in a very different way than that of the Scythian monks. In Bonnet's critical edition of the text, it is said that *perfectus homo, in quo dei filius ... mixtus*, i.e. *the perfect man in whom the Son of God... mixed*. M. Bonnet also has suggested the adding of the verb *erat* before *mixtus* (Bonnet 1898: 12). Thus, the phrase is clearer: *the perfect man, in whom the Son of God [had been] mixed*.

The first problem that occurs here is that the word *mixtus* was not extant in the original text. M. Bonnet included it in his critical edition, but he also pointed its absence in some of the manuscripts (Bonnet 1898: 12). It is of not less importance that both Greek translations of the Latin text¹⁵ omitted this word¹⁶, supporting the supposition that *mixtus* was not extant in the original Latin text.

Admitting that this word was extant in the original text, the sentence explains the hypostatic union in an uncommon manner for the first half of the 6th century. The Council of Chalcedon (451) stressed that the natures of Jesus Christ had been united *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*¹⁷. *Mixtus*, from the verb *misceo*, meant either *to mix, to mingle, to intermingle, to blend* or *to mix, to mingle, to unite*. It was used in theological treatises – both in the East and in the West – to describe the union of the two Jesus Christ's natures, before the apparition of the Nestorian doctrine (Hefele 1908: 219-220). But after the Council of Chalcedon, the theologians renounced its use in Christology. This last remark was valid even for the Scythian monks¹⁸.

Therefore, it is impossible for a Scythian monk, so well acquainted with the Christological terminology, to use such a careless expression.

There is also the possibility that the word *mixtus* was not extant in the original text. But even in this case, the assertion that *the perfect man in whom the Son of God* runs counter to the Scythian thought. It mirrored the Nestorian doctrine rather than the Catholic one. John Maxentius has firmly condemned the expression *alterius in altero habitation* (Glorie 1978: 82.225-226), i.e. *the dwelling of the Son of God into a man*, as a Nestorian teaching (Glorie 1978: 82.235-238). He has also asserted that the statement *deus habitare in homine* (Glorie 1978: 83.288), i.e. *God dwelling in a man*, is a Nestorian one, accepting only the expression *deus in corpore*, i.e. *God in a body* (Glorie 1978: 84.290-295) (Glorie 1978: 84.290-295).

Therefore, in the light of the Scythian thought, the sentence *perfectus homo, in quo dei filius*, i.e. *the perfect man in whom the Son of God*, in the *LatEp*, is a Nestorian assertion.

It allows a heretical interpretation and even suggests that in Jesus Christ are two persons, one of the perfect men, Jesus, and another of the Son of God, the Creator of the human race.

Conclusions

The above critical examination allows the following conclusions:

1. The *EpLat* is not a writing by a Scythian monk. There are some similarities between its teaching and that of the Scythian writings, as the emphasis of Jesus Christ's divinity, but the manner used by the *Epistle's* author in his endeavour to expose the hypostatic union radically differs from that of the Scythian monks.
2. The *EpLat's* author knew some Eastern theological beliefs. The most obvious of them was the proceeding of the Holy Spirit only from the Father, His remaining in the Son and His presence in the Son and in the Father. These three assertions had as their source the Eastern Trinitarian theology. The author knew the interdependence between them. This suggests that he had learned about it not from books but from another theologian, most probably an Eastern one, who had explained him the depth of this faith.
3. It is difficult to say that the Scythian monks were the source of the Trinitarian formula used at the beginning of the *LatEp*. If they were the source, then the *Epistle's* author had known them personally.
4. The *Epistle's* author also paid attention to the issue of the hypostatic union. The clumsy manner he used trying to explain the hypostatic union in the most important paragraph about it indicates that he was not a master of this theme. It is even possible that he had not understood the depth of the Eastern theological debates. In his exposition, he is closer to the Nestorian thought than the Catholic one. Nevertheless, his few insistences on the Christ's divine nature dispel the possibility of being a Nestorian heretic.
5. All these suggest that the *Epistle's* author was a Western Catholic not directly involved in the theological debates about the hypostatic union. It seems that he had met an Eastern theologian who had taught him few Eastern theological thoughts. He had been very impressed by them and tried to reproduce them in his work.

NOTES

¹ The only scholar who has adopted the Flamin's conclusion is Dvornik (Dvornik 1958: 182-183). The others have refrained from speculating on its veracity.

² „...uerum spiritum sanctum procedentem ex patre in filio permanentem,...” (Bonnet 1898: 2.4-5).

³ See below an analysis of the entire passage.

⁴ For *Filioque* to Fulgentius, see and Siecienski 2010: 67-68.

⁵ About the Scythian monks and their ideas, see: Glorie 1978: XXIII-XLI; Duchesne 1910: 511-518; Duchesne 1925; Zeiller 1918: 377-384; Vasiliev 1950: 160-250; Holubeanu 2006: 262-267.

⁶ The Scythian thought is found in the tenth dogmatic canon of the second Council of Constantinople, see Mansi 1763: 383-384.

⁷ Basiliius: 405^A and Bobrinskoy's interpretation of the fragment, in Bobrinskoy 1999: 66-67 (=Bobrinskoy 1992).

⁸ Obviously, the Scythian monks used the Nicene-Constantinopolitan version of this Creed.

⁹ The appreciation of Augustine of Hippo by the Scythian monks was very high. There are many influences and even quotations from his writings – *De Trinitate*; *Enchiridion ad Laurentium*; *De praedestinatione sanctorum*; *De gestis Pelagii* – in their works. The Scythian monks also mentioned his name with reverence, see Glorie 1978: 9.91, 142. 596-597, 603-604. For *Filioque* to Augustine of Hippo, see Sicienski 2010: 59-63.

¹⁰ . For *Filioque* in *Quicumque Vult*, see Sicienski 2010: 68.

¹¹ „... filio quia habitat pater, et ipse in patre, a quibus non separatur spiritus sanctus, ...”, see Glorie 1978: 99.796-797.

¹² „... uerum spiritum sanctum procedentem ex patre in filio permanentem, ut ostendatur unus spiritus esse in patre et filio...”, see Bonnet 1898: 2.4-6.

¹³ „pro salute hominum ueniens dei filius”, (Bonnet 1898: 4.3-4); „...auctor humani generis pro restauratione nostra hoc crucis patibulum non inuitus sed sponte suscepit!”, (Bonnet 1898: 5.7-9) „si crederideris Christum filium dei, qui crucifixus est a Iudaeis, uerum deum esse...”, (Bonnet 1898: 15.1-2).

¹⁴ „...necessario de immaculata uirgine natus perfectus homo, in quo dei filius, qui primum hominem fecerat, mixtus, uitam aeternam, quam perdidierant per Adam homines, repararet ac de ligno crucis lignum concupiscentiae excluderet, panderet in cruce immaculatas manus pro manibus incontinenter extensis...”, (Bonnet 1898: 11.8, 12.1-5).

¹⁵ The Greek translations kept unchanged the first part, i.e. chapters 1-9, of the Latin text, see Bonnet 1894: 461-466.

¹⁶ Greek 1: „ὁ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος, ἐν ᾧ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱὸς ὁ πρῶην ποιήσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον”, (Bonnet 1898: 11.18, 12.8), i.e. *the perfect man, in whom the Son of God, Who long ago had made the first man*; Greek 2: „τέλειος ἄνθρωπος ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱός, ὃς τὸν πρῶτον ἄνθρωπον ἦν πεποιηκώς”, (Bonnet 1898: 12.15-16), i.e. *perfect man, the Son of God, Who had made the first man*. As it can be seen, in the second Greek translation, considered by Bonnet (Bonnet 1894: 463), more literal than the first one, the translator has eliminated the Latin *in quo*. Thus, the text got an orthodox meaning. This suggests that the translator had understood the bull of the Latin text.

¹⁷ Mansi 1762: 115-116^{B-C}: ἐν δύο φύσεσιν ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως = *in duabus naturis inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter*.

¹⁸ John Maxentius used *misceo* in his writings, but never in the paragraphs regarding Christology, see Glorie 1978: 128.162-163; 129.178-179. Moreover, he repeatedly asserted the Chalcedonian terminology either directly, quoting the definition of the Council – see Glorie 1978: 10-11.116-118 – or using it in his own sentences – see Glorie 1978: 63.294-295; 77-82; 141.578-580. For the Scythian monks to Rome, see Glorie 1978: 158.33-36.

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