Biblical Intertextuality in St. Ambrose's *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*

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Les études concernant l'intertextualité biblique trouve en abondance des applications dans les écrits patristiques. Cette étude présente l'intertextualité biblique dans le Commentaire sur l'Evangile de Luc écrit par Saint Ambroise de Milan, avec le thème central concernant l'utilisation de bâton par les Apôtres, quand ils vont à la prédication. L'évêque utilisé avec soin, dans l'affirmation de l'idée d'autorité, de textes religieux trouvés en l'Ancien Testament, dans les livres de l'Exode, 4 Rois, Proverbes et Psaumes. L'étude indique également que l'intertextualité ambrosien non seulement utilise des textes bibliques dans l'argumentation, mais aussi de nombreux auteurs grecs et latins anciens, en exprimant l'ouverture de la théologie vers la culture.

Mot-clés: intertextualité, Ambroise, Luc, bâton, Ancien Testament, citation.

Introduction

Far from being the outcomes of an exclusive effort, the writings of St. Ambrose of Milan include topics of biblical and practical theology, such as *summa latinae ecclesiae*, which reveal to us the Orthodox fight in Northern Italy and Dalmatia against harmful distortions of the soul[1].

The paper which we shall hereafter refer to is called "Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam", being known as such since the times of the St. Augustine, the

[1] We mention the following studies on St. Ambrose's works, written in Romanian: Nestor Vornicescu, *Viaţa şi morala preotului după «De Oficiis» a Sf. Ambrozie*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română", 1958, no. 3-4; Mircea Nişcoveanu, *Învăţătura Sf. Ambrozie despre Sfântul Duh*, in „Studii Teologice", 1964, no. 7-8; Al. Moisiu, *Sfântul Ambrozie, păstor şi îndrumător al vieţii şi trăirii creştineşti*, in „Studii Teologice", 1974, no. 3-4; Pr. Prof. I. G. Coman, *Elemente ecumenice în orizontul istoric al Sfântului Ambrozie*, in „Ortodoxia", 1975, no. 2; Pr. Prof. I. G. Coman, *Profil literar ambrozian*, in „Mitropolia Banatului", 1975, no. 4-6; Pr. Prof. I. G. Coman, *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare adresează elogii Sf. Ambrozie al Milanului*, in „Studii Teologice", 1975, no. 5-6; Dan Negrescu, *Viaţa creştină în secolul IV reflectată în versurile Sf. Ambrozie al Milanului*, in „Altarul Banatului", 1990, no. 11-12; drd. Ştefan Zară, *Viaţa sfântului Ambrozie al Milanului în contextul religios-politic al secolului IV*, in „Glasul Bisericii", 2006, no. 1-4. Excerpt of romanian from latin translation is made by Ilie Melniciuc Puică, *Expunere la Evanghelia după Luca*, Editura Performantica, Iaşi, 2010.

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disciple of St. Ambrose of Milan. The paper dates back to 386 – 388, according to various patrologists[2].

Were we to evaluate the title of the paper as such, we would notice that it does not explain the whole Gospel of Luke in the manner of the father from Milan (the old Mediolanum); there are some fragments which he dealt with in extenso while omitting others. Among the latter, to which we add the limitations of this edition[3], we mention the absence of a comment on the Saviour's sermon about the mote and the beam in the eye of the moralist judge (Luke 6: 34-43), on the Parable of the sower (Luke 8: 1-19), on the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11: 2-4), as well as on the Parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18: 1-14). Some other fragments are only briefly mentioned, without focusing on the literal or mystagogical meaning with which Luke's text is often interpreted. From this category, we mention the texts from Luke 14: 1-24; 17: 11-19; 19: 11-27; 20: 27-39, as well as the occasional mentioning of Luke's chants, Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55) and Benedictus (Luke 1: 67-80).

The Commentary on the Gospel according to Luke in ten book was a bold attempt, bounded by the allegorical Homilies of scholar Origen[4] (who lived between 185 and 255 and wrote 39 Homilies on Luke) and of St. Cyril of Alexandria[5] (who lived between 370 and 444 and wrote 156 Homilies on Luke), aiming not only at making up for the exegetical scarcity related to the New Testament, but also at confirming the catechetical message for the neophytes of those times.

As far as the working method in the sense of those times is concerned, we may say that he adopts the literal exegetical method from which he derives the allegorical interpretation, often getting to the discovery of a mystagogical (anagogical) sense of the Gospel of Luke. In order to broaden the knowledge of the Christian universe, St. Ambrose does not hesitate to apply the comparative method, by approaching the Gospels synoptically, that is by a summative explanation of Matthew and Luke's texts. Especially in explaining the Saviour's anointing in

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[2] Ambrosius, *Migne Patrologia Latina 15,* (coll. 1527D – 1850D); Ambroise de Milan, *Traité sur L'Évangile de S. Luc,* vol. I, trad. G. Tissot, coll. Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 45, Paris, Éd. du Cerf, 1956, p. 10-11; Idem, *Traité sur L'Évangile de S. Luc,* vol. II, trad. G. Tissot, coll. Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 52, Paris, Éd. du Cerf, 1958; Origène, *Les Homélies sur Luc*, Introduction, traduction et notes par H. Crouzel, F. Fournier et P. Perichon, coll. Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 87, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1962, p. 70.

[3] This edition lacks fragments from Book V (the healing of the man taken with a palsy from Luke 5: 17-26; the Matthew's call to apostleship from Luke 5: 27-39; plucking the ears of corn on Saturday from Luke 6: 1-5 and the blessings from Luke 6: 12-49); Book VII (explaining the Parable of the prodigal son and of the unfaithful steward, Luke 15: 11- 16: 13), lacks that are properly marked by footnotes.

[4] Origen, *Scrieri alese* II, (*Omilii la Evanghelia după Luca*), trad. din limba greacă de T. Bodogae şi N. Neaga, în Coll. Părinţi şi Scriitori Bisericeşti, vol. 7, Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 69-132.

[5] Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Comentar la Sf. Evanghelie după Luca*, trad. din limba franceză de diac. Gh. Băbuţ, Editura Pelerinul Român, Oradea, 1998.

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Simon the Pharisee's house (Luke 7, 36-50) and His passions and resurrection, St. Ambrose compares the Gospel according to Luke with the Gospel according to John. Therefore, we may say, like the editor of Sources Chrétiennes that "the bishop of Milan offers us either less or more of [the Gospel of] Luke".[6]

The contents of the Commentary

When the commentary on the Gospel according to Luke was written, St. Ambrose apparently had several sets of homilies addressed to catechumens and Christians in Milan, probably in the previous years, explaining the biblical text. These were the starting point from which the Ambrosian texts that are linked to the Commentary on the Gospel according to Luke were selected, so that few elements suggest the complete insertion of a homily (such as mentioning the bishop ordination anniversary[7]) or allusions to historical events from politically and religiously turbulent times[8]. The salutation formulae through which a Christian preacher captures the attention of the audience seldom appears in Luke's introduction, which fuels the idea of a writing done in the office, without vivacity.

The existence of some fragments attributed to St. Ambrose, but that do not belong to the father of the church, has made Protestant scholars use the name "Ambrosiaster" (i.e. "according to Ambrose"), but we do not believe that there is any doubt about the paternity or affiliation of the piece. Whether the bishop himself or his secretary has written the text, it is obvious that the basis is the exegetical notes used before a public speech, further developed through frequent references to analogies on theological words or ideas, especially from the Book of Psalms of King David.

The ten books are unevenly made, some elements of the third Gospel being dealt with exhaustively, others only transiently or elusively. Were we to mention unfinished ideas, we should not avoid the references from Book V, 10, VI, 83, VII, 25.60.194 and 195. The Prologue of the Commentary, comprised of eight subsections, evokes the necessity of knowing the gospel and the symbol that St. Irenaeus of Lyon used to embellish St. Luke's writing. The ten books are uneven in

[6] G. Tissot, *cited translation*, vol. 1, p. 10.

[7] Book VIII, 73 confirms: „It makes me happy that we should read the beginning of the Law on this anniversary day of my episcopal ordination. For it seems to me that each passing year the grace of priesthood recommences, just as the seasons of the year recommences."

[8] His bishopric, occurring during the rule of three Roman emperors (Valentinian I, Gratian and Valentinian II) did not lack tensions, especially during the joint ruling of Valentinian II and his mother Justina, when the Arians, led by Mercurin-Auxentius obtained important privileges in Milan. The Arian controversies, supported by the political rule, made many Orthodox bishops from Italy search refuge. The return to the flock entrusted to them in 388, through the reconciliation of St. Ambrose and Valentinian II, is rendered in terms similar to the return of the fleet from the storm, having defeated the waves and fluctuating: "Now breathes a gentle zephyr; it tempers the burning heat that afflicted all Italy – the burning heat and violent passions stirred up whether by the perverseness of the Jews or, more recently, by the menace of the Arians. The storm has died out. Peace spreads its sail. Faith blows. Eagerly the mariners of Faith return to the ports they had left, and press sweet kisses on their native shores now free from strife. How happy they are to be free from peril and delivered from danger!"

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terms of size, the text being grouped into subsections numbered with Arabic numerals. The sections of St. Ambrose's commentary are perceived especially through reading the biblical text, as a *motto*, the constituents of a homily (the salutation formulae, the introduction, as well as the catalyzation of the audience) most of the times being absent.

Book I comprises in its 46 subsections the analysis of the prologue to the third Gospel, an introduction to the biblical history and the good tidings brought to Elizabeth about the birth of John, the Forerunner of God.

Book II comprises, in its 95 subsections, presentations of the events of the first three chapters of the Gospel of Luke, specifically those occurring between the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary and those following Jesus baptism.

Book III makes a detailed analysis of 77 names, listed in the genealogy of the Jesus Christ as contained in Luke 3: 23-38, comparing them with the 42 names in the genealogy according Matthew 1, 1-17. This book covers over 49 subsections.

Book IV deals with the public life events of the Saviour, as reported in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Gospel of Luke. The 79 translated subsections include teachings that are useful to Christians, connected to the temptation of the Saviour, the Nazareth sermon, the healing of the demoniac from the synagogue and the miraculous draught of fish.

Book V deals in its 117 subsections with biblical episodes narrated by St. Luke in chapters 5 to 7.

Book VI, in its 109 subsections, recounts the events of Jesus' life from chapters 7 - 9.

Book VII begins with the moment of the Transfiguration of Jesus, considered by many scholars the last sign given by the Savior in Galilee and the onset of the long journey to Jerusalem. It also includes comments on chapters 9-16, in 248 subsections.

Book VIII continues tracking the Saviour's journey to Jerusalem, through parables and miracles. In the 96 subsections, it addresses the main events narrated by St. Luke in chapters 16-19.

Book IX comprises little information. The 39 subsections deal with the entry of the Lord in Jerusalem, the parable of the wicked husbandmen, the dispute over the Roman fees, what becomes of the soul after death in the argument against the Sadducees, all thee being narrated in chapter 20 of the Gospel of Luke.

The last book deals with the passions of Christ and His resurrection from the points of view of all the holy evangelists, highlighting the specific time of the third Gospel of the Ascension to Heaven of the Risen One. The 184 subsections deal with chapters 20-24 of the third Gospel.

The above division corresponds to the structure in this translation, although there are no indications that the ten books were grouped in this manner by the author. Moreover, the claim of St. Augustine that his mentor wrote the Commentary of the Gospel according to Luke in nine *opuscules* made the patrologists encoding text collections compress two books in one in order to

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achieve the number that the Bishop of Hippo suggested. The Viennese reviewers joined the first two books in our translation into one; the Maori reviewers joined Books V and VI or VI and VII (although the latter is unexpectedly long), dividing the eighth book into two! The various divisions of the text as a whole are credible when noting that, except for Books II and III, Books VIII and IX do not have an ending, the commentary flowing naturally from Book IV to Book V, from Book V to Book VI, from Book VI to Book VII, from Book VII to Book VIII. The only text that is missing is in the seventh book, between subsections 21-22, being a commentary on Luke 9: 37-56. We also have a summary comment that, in only one verse in Book VIII, 32, explains the text of Luke 17: 11-19.

All in all, *The Commentary to the Gospel according to Luke* is the longest writing of those dedicated to the third Gospel in the patristic period, in which the divine inspiration, the ancient rhetorical patterns and the urge to teach the catechumens the path of the Kingdom harmoniously intertwine.

Sources used in Exposition to the Gospel of Luke

1. The Holy Bible

Searching carefully the Ambrosian text, we immediately notice the large number of citations and paraphrases from the biblical text. For the Gospel of Luke, there are over 250 scriptural quotations and allusions, with as many references to The Book of Psalms in the Old Testament.

The love for his calling, that of a bishop, made St. Ambrose educate himself in the study and efficient use of the Holy Bible, in preaching the true faith. Even his disciple, St. Augustine[9], appreciated the bishop's effort to read and understand the Holy Scripture, after nearly twelve years of episcopate. Since the Orthodox Bishop of Milan was not so interested in knowing the text as such, but in the use of the Holy Scripture in order to deepen the divine teachings of the Holy Church, we notice the ease in reproducing passages from the Book of Psalms, evidence of cultic continuous reading of this sapiently inspired text. Noteworthy is also the way in which he makes connections between texts from different books of the Holy

[9] For I could not request of him what I wished as I wished, in that I was debarred from hearing and speaking to him by crowds of busy people, whose infirmities he devoted himself to. With whom when he was not engaged (which was but a little time), he either was refreshing his body with necessary sustenance, or his mind with reading. But while reading, his eyes glanced over the pages, and his heart searched out the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent. Off times, when we had come (for no one was forbidden to enter, nor was it his custom that the arrival of those who came should be announced to him), we saw him thus reading to himself, and never otherwise; and, having long sat in silence (for who dared interrupt one so intent?), we were fain to depart, inferring that in the little time he secured for the recruiting of his mind, free from the clamour of other men's business, he was unwilling to be taken off. And perchance he was fearful lest, if the author he studied should express anything vaguely, some doubtful and attentive hearer should ask him to expound it, or to discuss some of the more abstruse questions, as that, his time being thus occupied, he could not turn over as many volumes as he wished; although the preservation of his voice, which was very easily weakened, might be the truer reason for his reading to himself. But whatever was his motive in so doing, doubtless in such a man was a good one. (Augustine, *Confessions* VI, 3, trans. James J. O'Donnell, Oxford, 1992).

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Bible, returning, in his plea on a word in the Gospel of Luke, to the Old Testament and segments from the Pauline paraenesis in the New Testament.

The extension of the canon of Sacred Scripture had been settled in the Church through canons 59 and 60 of the Council of Laodicea, later being acknowledged in the western part of the Roman Empire in the councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397), during the writing of *The Commentary of the Gospel according to Luke*. From the Books of the Old Testament, the author does not quote from II Samuel, Nehemiah, Esther, the prophets Joel, Jonah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Malachi and from the Books of the Maccabees. The New Testament Books are extensively quoted. As he was the bishop of Milan, Italy, it was natural that the most used text should be the Latin version. We do not think that Jerome's[10] translation was used – the translation which later became the official translation of the Church, in Latin Vulgate, but we do know that for some segments from Luke, he rendered the scriptural meaning closer to the Greek original. The Latin reviewers of the Ambrosian writings suggest that, for the Old Testament, he used the Greek translation known as the Septuagint, the quotations being done from the memory, with a few errors and personal additions.

Of special interest for this study is the fact that the beginnings of the 10 books invariably render a verse from the Gospel of Luke, but only the initial fragment, considering that the audience or the reader knows the continuation. Hence, we indirectly deduce that the exposition was originally a catechetical text that was also a source, implying special training for the audience, or as they say in the Catholic Christian tradition, a "lectio divina" through the constant reading of The Holy Scripture.

In order to offer an instance of biblical intertextuality, we chose a fragment from Book VII (Luke 9: 27 – 16: 16) that includes texts from the Holy Bible, the common element being "the staff":

[10] Regarding the relationship between the Bishop of Milan and St. Jerome, we only have partial information. The Latin translator of the Bible did not show sympathy for Ambrose. They apparently met in Rome, sometimes around 382 and they did not reach agreement in Marcel and Marceline's court. What is for certain is that Jerome only briefly dealt with him in his work, *De viris illustribus* (Patrologia Latina 23, coll. 712), stating: "Ambrosius Mediolensis episcopus, usque in praesentem diem scribit, de quo, quia superest, meum judicium subtraham, ne in alterutram partem aut adulatio in me reprehendatur aut veritas". Follower of Origen, who believed that he would succeed in the critical editing of the Holy Scripture, Jerome stated about St. Ambrose that he was „a plagiarist who seeks to acquire something of the glory of the great Alexandrian [i.e. Origen]", since the first two books The Commentary carefully follow his predecessor's exposition. We mentioned that the information on the relationship between the two is not complete. Even the above accusation, which tries to limit St. Ambrose's originality and inspiration, may be deleted if we approach critically Origen's and Cyril of Alexandria's comments on the Gospel of Luke. Reading the Romanian translations of both, we notice Cyril's tendency to keeping the comments within the same framework, developing or, when necessary, shortening his predecessor's commentary. This cannot be plagiarism or lack of originality, but we may talk, however, a catechetical pattern that was confirmed in time, to which later scholar conformed.

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59. The apostles are given orders not to carry a staff in their hand - this is a detail added by Matthew *(cf. Mt 10:10)*. What is the significance of the staff ? The staff stands for power, and it can also be used to beat people. The Lord is humble - for *"in humility His judgment has been raised high" (Is 53:8)* **-** and, being humble, the Lord has instructed His disciples to carry out their mission in a spirit of humility.

To humility, it has pleased the Lord to join patience. We have Peter's testimony to this patience: *"When He was reviled. He did not revile in return; when He was struck, He did not strike back" (1 P 2:23)*. What He is saying is: "Be imitators of me; drop your desire for revenge. When arrogant people strike you, do not strike back with your fists, but reply to their blows with patience and greatness of heart."

You should never imitate actions that you abhor in others. Your very gentleness towards insolent fellows will strike them much harder than any blows. Such was the blow that the Lord returned to the man who struck Him, when He said: *"If anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other one as well" (Mt 5:39)*. It is a kind of judgment on a person, a dagger thrust in the heart, when that person perceives that in return for the wrong he has done, he receives only kindness.

60. On the other hand, there were also certain apostles sent out with a rod, as Paul indicates when he says: *"What –would you have? Do you want me to come with rod in hand, or lovingly and in a spirit of mildness?" (1 Co 4:21)*. Paul also gave this rod to Timothy: *"Reprove, entreat, rebuke" (2 Tm 4:2)*. Perhaps, too, before the Lord's Passion, when the minds of the people were swaying this way and that, gentleness was the one thing necessary. But after the Passion, reprimands became necessary. Yes indeed, let the Lord soothe the heart, and let Paul administer correction. Let Him who can touch even the hardest hearts, use persuasion; and let Paul, who cannot always succeed in persuasion, make use of correction. Paul, well versed in the teaching of the Law, drew from it his rod. For he had read: *"Whoever spares the rod, loves not his child" (Pr 13:24)*. He had also read that to eat the paschal meal the Jews were commanded to have a staff in their hand *(cf. Ex 12:11)*. The Old Testament also quotes the Lord as saying: "*I will visit their iniquities with a rod" (Ps 88:33 LXX)*.

In the New Testament, however, the Lord offers Himself so as to spare the world. *"If it is I,"* He says, *"whom you seek, let these others go" (Jn 18:8)*. In another place you read that when the apostles wanted to ask Heaven to send down fire on the Samaritans who would not welcome the Lord Jesus to their city, He turned and reprimanded them: *"You do not* know," He said, *"of what spirit you are. The Son of Man did not come to destroy souls, but to save them" (Lk 9:55)*.

61. It follows, then, that the more perfect are sent out without a staff; and the weaker eat with staff in hand. Yet even Paul, though he may threaten to use the rod, visits sinners in *a spirit of mildness.* As well as that, just to show you how gentle a doctor he is, he consults the wishes of those whom he is going to reprimand. *"What would you have?"* he asks, *"That I me to you rod in hand, or lovingly and in a spirit of mildness?" (Co 4:21)*. He mentions the rod only once,

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but twice he adds amendments of a kinder nature; for he joins mildness to love. True, he began by threatening; but he also used kindness, for in his second letter to the Corinthians he says: *"I call God to witness upon my soul that, to spare you, I did not come to Corinth" (2 Co 1:23)*. Now see why he thought he must spare them: *"So as not to come to you again in sorrow" (2 Co 2:1)*. He has thrown away the rod, and what he uses now is gentleness.

62. *"Salute no one on the way (Lk 10:4)*.

This could strike you as somewhat harsh and arrogant, and not at all keeping with the precepts of a Lord who is gentle and humble. He had told His disciples that they must even give up their place at table *(cf. Lk 14:7sq.),* and now He is telling them: *"Salute no one on the way"*. It is a custom everywhere, and a very pleasant custom, to exchange polite greetings. It is in this manner that those of lower station win favour with those of higher station; it is a practice held in honour even among the pagans. It is a custom observed by Gentiles and Christians alike. How, then, could our Lord tear from us this pleasant mark of courtesy?

63. But, my friend, you must think a moment. He does not simply say: *"Salute no one",* but adds: *"on the way"*. Remember that Elisha, too, when dispatching his servant to lay his staff on the dead body of the little boy, told him to salute no one on the way *(cf.2 K 4:29)*. He told him to hurry up, to lose no time in carrying out his mission, but to hasten on towards resurrection. No chat with people he might meet on the road was to delay his carrying out of this important mission.

Here, too, it is not the pleasant custom of greeting people that the Lord forbids, but rather the failure to carry out at once the task imposed, and the placing of obstacles in the way. When divine commands are issued, human customs may have to be put to one side for the present. It is a lovely thing to greet people; but the accomplishment of divine works is lovelier still - especially if done promptly. A delay in carrying out a commission often gives offence. That is why even politeness is sometimes forbidden, for fear that civility - excellent though it be - should get in the way of duty. That is, if it is a duty that *must* be performed at once"[11].

2. Ancient authors

St. Ambrose came from an old family of Roman senators, converted to Christianity in the time of the persecutions. His father, also named Ambrose, was named by Constantine the Great proconsular prefect of Gaul. After his father's early death, his mother left for Rome, where his two sons were given a rich literary and legal culture. In his writings, he used all skills: those of an aristocrat with an excellent education, those of a lawyer, governor, bishop, man of authority as well as an example of humility.

The works of Virgil, Cicero, Ovid and Pliny, of the Greek Plato, Aristotle, Homer or Diogenes Laertius that would be studied during oratory, grammar and science lesson, were part of the education of the Roman young men. He cites or

[11] *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel according to Saint Luke,* transl. Ide M.Ni Riain MA, B. Phil, Haleyon Press, Dublin, 2001, p. 208 – 210.

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alludes to the Virgil's *The Aeneid*[12], *Georgics* and *Bucolics*[13]. Book II, IV, V and IX from the Commentary abounds in literary allusions and expressions in the rhythm of Virgil, adapting the message to St. Ambrose's Christian purpose. We mention here the main references, following the Dominican Gabriel Tissot's notes in volumes 45 and 52 of Sources Chrétiennes, a collection where the father of classical Latin literature is highly praised, indicating St. Ambrose's book and cited source.

In Book I, 44 of the Commentary, he cites *The Georgics* III, 136; in Book II, 66, he alludes to *The Bucolics* IV, 61. Virgil is more often quoted in Book IV, subsection 3 (from *The Aeneid* I, 536) and section 7 (*The Georgics* II, 362 and 379), in Book V, subsection 69 (from *The Georgics* II, 507), subsection 90 (from *The Aeneid* II, 274), and subsection 94 (from *The Aeneid* VI, 598).

In Book VII of the Commentary, we find references to Virgil's work: in subsection 49 (*The Aeneid* IX, 60), in subsection 73 (*The Aeneid* II, 274) while in subsections 127 and 128 there are references to *The Aeneid* XII, 413 and III, 112, to *The Georgics* II, 401. Thrilled with Virgil's style, St. Ambrose repeats the text of *The Aeneid* VI, 724, previously stated in Commentary V, 90 - in the seventh book, subsection 113. This book of St. Ambrose, in subsection 162, also comprises a collage of *The Georgics* II, and *The Georgics* II, 51 and 59. In Book VIII, subsection 75, we find a quote from *The Aeneid* XI, 572, while Book combines, in subsections 31, 32 and 33, ideas and words from the ancient meter as used in *The Georgics* II, 7-8, II, 354 and 373. The last reference to *The Aeneid* (I, 112 and 123) is found in Book X, subsection 149.

From Cicero, exposing his juridical training, he cites, in his Commentary, Book II, 42 (*Orator. Brutus*, 27), in Book VI, 25 (from *Pro Cn. Plancio*, 28), and in Book VII, 15 (from *De Senectute* X, 31).[14] The same juridical preoccupation is proven in the defence of Apostle Peter whom he does not hold guilty of the threefold denial that he uttered during the Saviour's judgment by the Jewish rulers (cf. Commentary X, 72 – 93).

The ancient poet Ovid is present in the Commentary through the allusion to *Metamorphosis*[15] XI, Book VI, 88.

Pliny the Elder is also present through a paraphrase from *Natural History*[16] XI, 177, in Book VII, 48.

Ideas from Aristotle's *Magna Moralia*[17] II, 54 can be found in Book VII, subsection 139, alongside with those from Plato's *Timaios* 89[18].

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[12] Vergiliu, *Eneida*, Editura Mondero, Bucureşti, 2007.

[13] Vergiliu, *Bucolice, Georgice*, Editura pentru literatură universală, Bucureşti, 1967.

[14] See Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Opere alese*, vol. I-III, coll. Clasicii literaturii universale, trad. G. Guțu, Editura Univers, Bucureşti, 1973.

[15] Publius Ovidiu Nasso, *Metamorfoze*, Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti, 1959.

[16] Pliniu, *Naturalis Historia. Enciclopedia cunoştinţelor din Antichitate,* vol. II (cărţile VII-XI), trad. din limba latină de Ioana Costa et. alli, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, 2001.

[17] Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, în *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W.D. Ross, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910-1952.

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Diogenes Laertios' work[19] that reminds us of Plato's Life (III, 83) represents for St. Ambrose a pleasant recollection, rendered in Book V, subsection 76 of The Commentary. Homer's *Iliad* [20] (I, 249 and III, 222) and *Odyssey*[21] (VII, IX, XI and XII) complete the sources of St. Ambrose's allusions to the Greek literature in Books VII, 12 and IV, 2 of The Commentary.

Conclusion

After being elected bishop of Milan, as a self-educated person, St. Ambrose proves outstanding literary skills, combining sacred texts with the classical ones, texts from the New Testament with the Old Testament ones.

The text explaining the sending of the Apostles to preaching is an opportunity for Saint Ambrose to explore the Book of Psalms, Proverbs and II Kings of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament Gospel of Luke and the Epistles to the Corinthians.

We understand, therefore, why St. Ambrose uses The Holy Bible as source of divine pedagogy, changing the type of education by using a pragmatic method, based not so much on exterior stereotypes, but on the (living) experience of the message they convey. The information is taken from the Bible, the content of the teaching is life in Christ and the teaching method follows the hearing-heart-annunciation route through the word (cf. Rom 10:8-11). It is a journey through The Holy Scripture and with an open end in Christ.

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