CHURCH, WORSHIP, AND EXEGESIS. OBSERVATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THE AMBROSIAN TRADITION*

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Résumé L'affirmation de Grégoire le Grand que l'exégète ab historia in mysterium surgit bien montre l'unité organique de l'ancienne expérience chrétienne, dans laquelle kerygma, participation au contenu salvifique du kerygma à travers les Mystères Divins, et proclamation solennelle des Saintes Écritures se présentent comme une unité organique, où chaque élément est relié inséparablement à l'autre. Cette connotation de l'ancienne réalité ecclésiale trouve en Ambrose un interprète particulièrement représentatif. En lui la relation complexe entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament reçoit sa recomposition dans l'expérience mystèrique. Il faut observer que à Milan, dans l'ordre des lectures liées à la célébration eucharistique, n'a jamais manqué la Lectio de l'Ancien Testament. Dans cette combinaison ininterrompue de l'Ancien e du Nouveau Testament dans leur synthèse mystèrique on peut dire que l'Église ambrosienne a effectivement exprimé son enracinement dans l'expérience témoigné de son ancien pasteur.
Mots-clés : Ambroise de Milan, *Ambrosianum mysterium*, exégèse, Église, le Lectionnaire Ambrosien.

1. Church, Scriptures and Textual Traditions

Half a century has passed since the celebration of the Second Vatican Council, the influence of which proved decisive for the life of the Catholic communion. Principally, the council Constitution *Dei Verbum* on the Divine Revelation, promulgated on November 18th, 1965[1], determined – within such a large communion of Churches – a renewed attention to the biblical text and a flourishing fervor of studies. With regard to this, it is significant that between October 5th and 26th, 2008, the Roman Pope Benedict XVI presided in the Vatican the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops devoted to the theme *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. The post-synodal apostolic exhortation, in the third paragraph, explicitly presents such synodal meeting as the conclusion of a path that started with the

* *Église, culte et exégèse. Observations à la lumière de la tradition ambrosienne.*

[1] "Constitutio Dogmatica de divina Revelatione: *Dei Verbum*", in *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, IV (Periodus IV), Pars VI, Sessio Publica VIII (die XVIII mensis Novembris anno MCMLXV), Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1978, 597-609.

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above-mentioned council Constitution; the title of the paragraph reads: *From the "Dei Verbum" to the Synod on the Word of God* (BENEDICTUS XVI, pp. 681-787).

On the other hand, through the council impulse, the Catholic communion has also fully become part of the ecumenical movement, and such opening to the remaining Christian world has also had a certain weight on the relations with and between the various confessions. In the post-council climate – characterized by sincere enthusiasm for the "rediscovered" biblical text and marked by a new esteem for the other and different ecclesial experiences – the Scriptures have been regarded more and more as common patrimony shared by all the Churches and the opinion has been spreading that the exegesis of the Scriptures, if carried out on the basis of a rigorous textual analysis, is naturally destined to amply convergent conclusions. Initiatives aiming to promote inter-confessional translations of the Bible can be considered as an emblematic reflection of such an ideal attitude, which – among other things – has allowed a rapid passage from the original Protestant inspiration, even if supra-denominational, of the British and Foreign Bible Society (founded in 1804) to the current close collaboration between the United Bible Societies and the Catholic Biblical Federation.[2]

A fundamental impulse toward such collaboration has indirectly come from the first of the council constitutions too (*i.e.* the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, promulgated on December 4th, 1963), in which the synodal fathers established that, in the rites of the Latin Churches, the Scriptures in particular should be proclaimed in the languages of the celebrating communities.[3] Therefore, also in a Catholic ambit the question rose – it had already risen for Biblical Societies in connection with the expansion of Protestant missionary activity between the 19th and 20th centuries – in relation to common reference text, from which the various versions in the modern languages could be drawn.

The Latin Church actually had a biblical text – the *Vulgata* – that progressively prevailed since the early Middle Ages and was ratified with the edition of Clement VIII in 1592 (1593[2], 1598[3]). However, philological research of sacred texts that developed in the 18th and 19th centuries and continued – with their exegetic implications – in the 20th century, made the textual limitations of Jerome's work apparent. Hence, in the ambit of Latin Catholicism, the necessity of having an

[2] Especially significant, with regard to this, is the document titled *Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible*, jointly undersigned in Rome, on November 16th, 1987, by the United Bible Societies and by the (then) Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Holy See, as a revision of the previous agreement reached in 1968 [On-line: *http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/generaldocs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19871116_guidelines-bible_en. html*, accesed at: 12.09.2014].

[3] "Constitutio de sacra liturgia: Sacrosanctum Concilium", 36, in *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, II (Periodus II), Pars VI, Sessio Publica III (die IV mensis Decembris anno MCMLXIII), Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973, 418.

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official biblical text established according to more critically and philologically accurate criteria. The Apostolic See decided, therefore, to promote a new Latin edition of the Bible, the *Neo Vulgata*, indicated in 1979 as the only official text for the cult of Latin-rite Churches (see IOANNES PAULUS II, pp. 557-559). Following the idea of *Haebraica veritas* already formulated by Jerome[4], this new version pursued conformity to the Masoretic Text in the Old Testament, whereas the New Testament was a revision, based on Greek originals, of the *Vulgata*.[5]

The definition of an official form of the biblical text cannot, in any case, silence the fact that textual multiformity is a connotation strongly rooted in the history of the Scriptures, and that a conscious acceptance of such textual multiformity – especially in a Christian ambit – has appeared in the course of centuries as a constant element, and not without implications that are also significant in the doctrinal ambit. As a matter of fact, the generalized phenomenon of the ancient translations of the Bible – with the compilation of texts that were functional to the requisites of Churches that came into being among the most diverse peoples (from the populations of the Latinspeaking West to the Oriental ones sharing the Syrian linguistic tradition; from Armenians to Georgians, Copts, and Ethiopians) – demonstrates that the sacred text was conceived as a live reality that organically interacted with the life of the Churches, undergoing transformations in accordance with their variegated anthropological configuration. It is not a coincidence that the Roman Pope Gregory I was able to affirm: "diuina eloquia cum legente crescent."[6]

These multiple translations are in general the evidence of a profoundly religious care in trying to repropose, within the new language contexts, the original Greek text – of the Old and New Testament – in its contents, and sometimes also in its form, in various cases having recourse to calques or coining neologisms. However, simply because of their existence, these translations (which sometimes also drew on the Hebraic text and other previous translations) highlight the absence of any absolutistic nature of the text. The sacredness of the book came from the announcement of

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[4] See *Epistula CVI ad Suniam et Fretelam*, 1, 2, 11, in HIERONYMUS, 104.9-10, 105.26, 111.4.

[5] With regard to this latter aspect, the fact that men of the end of the 20th century – *i.e.* a time when Latin was, in fact, a dead language – considered legitimate their correction of the Latin of Latin-speaking translators of the 3rd and 4th centuries (who, moreover, lived in a context where Greek was widely used as a *lingua franca*) seems a rather peculiar episode. Such amazement gets even deeper at noticing the alterations made to expressions that in the course of the centuries had profoundly shaped the language of church: see the verse "Nostra autem *conversatio* in caelis est (gr. Ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει)" (*Ph* 3:20a), which became "Noster enim *municipatus* in caelis est". In addition, choosing for the Old Testament a specific source of the Middle Ages (the Masoretic Text) raises some methodological questions given that the existence of a multiplicity of textual traditions in ancient times had found a positive attestation in Qumran. See Martone (1997).

[6] GREGORIUS I, HOM. I, VII, 8, 244. 11-12; as for such statement, see Bori (1987).

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salvation that it contained, not from the words through which such announcement was presented. Those words, due to their extremely high function, could not but be an object of veneration; on the other hand, they were not considered by the ancient Christian generations as intangible realities impossible to repropose in a different language system, or to be modified within the same language system (as shown by the tradition of the Greek text, its various versions, and the textual traditions of those versions). Still at the beginning of the 16th century, Erasmus, in his edition of the *Greek New Testament* (1516) did not make any attempt to check the reliability of the text; and so, not having a complete manuscript of the *Revelation*, he did not balk at attempting for the final section (22:16-21) a retroversion – not without mistakes – from the *Vulgata*.

It was only in the 19th century that the necessity of a critical restoration of the text, notably the New Testament, which Karl Lachmann saw as an inescapable issue, turned into the colossal editions by Constantin von Tischendorf (1869-1872[8]), Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1881), followed by the *Novum Testamentum Graece* of Eberhard Nestle (1898).[7]

2. The Church as a Community of Cult

As a matter of fact, this huge, intense critical work – focusing on the text and its configuration – has induced a consideration of exegesis and biblical hermeneutics itself as direct derivations of textual criticism. But, using again Gregory's words, the exegete "ab historia in mysterium surgit" (GREGORIUS I, HOM. I, VI, 3, p. 198): *i.e.*, he is called to transcend the text in order to grasp the announcement of salvation, which is at the origin of such textual datum and finds its expression in it.

We could wonder if, and to what extent, the importance of the text has been insisted upon by the doctrinal principle of the *sola Scriptura*, *i.e.* by the "absolutization" of the Scriptural enunciation as an exclusive criterion of faith. As a matter of fact, such enunciation as well (formulated by the great Reformers of the 16th century to dispute the doctrinal crystallizations elaborated by the late-medieval academic Scholastica) seems to be – in its dialectic polarization between Scriptures and Tradition – the fruit of a "scholastica" speculative abstraction, rather far from the organic unity of the ancient Christian experience. In the latter (basis of the subsequent ecclesial experiences), *kérygma* (*i.e.* the announcement of salvation through Christ), participation in the redeeming contents of *kérygma* through the Divine Mysteries, and solemn proclamation of the Holy Scriptures appear as a unitary and indissoluble whole, in which each element is organically and inseparably connected with the others, thus finding in the celebration of the Mysteries the moment of synthesis.

[7] For an accurate and well-informed profile of the New Testament's textual history refer to the pages of Aland/ Aland (1982); see Metzger/ Ehrman (2004[4]).

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It is not a coincidence that ancient Christian communities perceived themselves, and were perceived, as communities of initiates to the Divine Mysteries. This is positively attested from the outside with the *Letter to Trajan* by Pliny the Younger[8] or with the oration by Marcus Cornelius Fronto re-echoed by MINUCIUS FELIX, pp. 7-8, and from the inside by voices such as the philosopher Justin[9], or direct evidence such as the DIDACHÈ or the TRAD. AP.[10]

This original nexus between community and cult is, on the other hand, an element easily traceable in the Christian lexicon itself. Already in Clement of Alexandria (STROMATA VII, V, 29. 3, pp. 21-22) and perhaps also in Tertullian (DE PUDICITIA, XIII, 7, p. 208), certainly in the letter of the Roman clergy to Cyprian[11] and in the *Didascalia* in the Syrian area (DIDASC., II, 57, p. 158) – as well as in a more and more generalized manner since the end of the third century and during of the fourth – in Greek and Latin the place of worship appeared with the name used to designate the community: ἐκκλησία/ *ecclesia*.[12] This strict identification was also maintained in the new juridical and institutional conditions determined in Constantine's age by the introduction of the ecclesiastic institutions in the Empire order.[13] Even in this

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[8] C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus, *Epistula ad Traianum imperatorem*, 7-8, in PLINIUS SECUNDUS, p. 96.

[9] Iustinus, *Apologia Maior*, 65-67, in IUSTINUS, pp. 125-130.

[10] For a picture of the complex problems connected with this text see Peretto (1996: 5-99). In addition to the critical observations by Metzger (1988, 1992a, 1992b), it is worthwhile to point out the rather "corrosive" reading of the text conducted by Bradshaw *et al.* (2002), a reading, perhaps, not completely free from that arbitrary tone that sometimes accompanies hypercritical attitudes.

[11] C*ypriano papae presbyteri et diaconi Romae consistentes*, in CYPRIANUS, XXX, 6. 3, pp. 147, 139.

[12] With regard to this, the *Epistula Aureliani de libris Sibyllinis*, reproduced by Flavius Vopiscus (XX, 5) in SCRIPTORES, II, p. 164, is significant.

[13] In February 313, in Milan – notwithstanding the historiographical *vulgata* – probably there was no edict. The contents of the agreement then reached between Constantine and Licinius, ratified by the matrimonial union of the latter with Constantine's sister, Constance, were expounded by Licinius himself in the rescript (but for Eusebius: διάταξις) transmitted to us in a Latin compilation and a Greek translation (LACTANTIUS, pp. 132-135; HIST. ECCLES., X, 5. 2-14, pp. 883-887). See Seeck (1891: 381-386) and, more recently, Marcone (2012: 47a). In the Conference held in Milan in May 2013, on the theme *Costantino a Milano (313-2013)*, Noel Lenski – referring to the remarks of Matthews (2000) on the modalities of transmitting the imperial laws – supported the view that the rescript promulgated by Licinius at Nicomedia can presuppose the existence of a previous edict; however, on the same occasion Bernard Stolte reaffirmed that it is not possible to speak of the Edict of Milan without quotation marks. The agreement of Milan constituted in any case the ratifycation of the principle of religious freedom ("liberam potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque uoluisset"). After that event, an abundant set of regulations were inforced, which began to rapidly integrate the ecclesiastic institutions into the order of the Empire.

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new situation, the Church continued to assume the form of a community of initiates to the Divine Mysteries[14], so much so that in the Illyricum the phenomenon of lexical identification between community and place of worship continued to appear, obviously reflecting the perspective of the new historical context. Thus, from the Latin term *basilica*, a denomination of the community was drawn, as shown still today by the Romanian *biserică*[15], and, in the same way, from the Greek κυριακόν the derived word that is variously present in the Germanic ambit to indicate the community of believers; see Pompen (1929).[16]

It was in such a context profoundly connoted by the celebration of the Divine Mysteries that, in relation to the latter, the solemn proclamation of the Scriptures found its place within the community.

3. From Hebrew μνημόσυνον to Christian ἀνάμνησιν

However, as far as the Christian Mysteries are concerned, a rapid clarification seems to be opportune.

In the *Torah*, salvation does not appear as limited to those who directly participated in the redeeming events narrated, tied to precise space and time coordinates: it is a salvation which every generation is called upon to enter. As a matter of fact, for the Easter celebration *Exodus* states: "Keep, then, this custom of the unleavened bread. Since it was on this very day that I brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt, you must celebrate this day *throughout your generations* as a perpetual institution" (*Ex* 12:17). With regard to this, Rabbi Gamaliel thus observed: "*In every generation* we must consider ourselves as if *we were those* who left Egypt; for this reason it is written: «On this day you shall explain to your son: This is because of what the Lord *did for me*

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[14] An ample documentation about the use of the term *mysterium* as referring to the Christian worship was offered between the fourth and fifth centuries by the *Codex Theodosianus* too (CODEX THEOD., pp. 885, 867, 874, 875, 879) itself: XVI, 7, 4 (391 Mai. 11; Concordiae); XVI, 5, 36 (399 Iul. 6, Constantinopoli); XVI, 5, 54 (414 Iun. 17, Ravennae); XVI, 5, 57 (415 Oct. 31, Constantinopoli); XVI, 5, 58 (415 Nov. 6, Constantinopoli); XVI, 5, 65 (428 Mai. 30, Constantinopoli).

[15] See Densușianu (1901: 261; 1961: 173) and Mihăescu (1978: 173). As for the term *basilica* used in a Christian meaning, see Schiaffini (1923), Ferrua (1933), Battisti (1960), Tagliavini (1963: 271-278).

[16] The continuity of such mysteric self-awareness of the Christian Church continued to appear in the early Middle Ages with the evangelization of western Slavs, Bohemians and Poles, who similarly denominated the community after the place where the cult was celebrated. However, that was neither the κυριακόν (house of the Lord), nor the *basilica*, but rather the *castellum*, *i.e.* the residential place of the prince, as shown by the Czech word *kostel* – from which derived the Polish *kościół* – (Tagliavini 1963: 276-277, 539); the genesis of this word is immediately evident from the site of the Prague cathedral of St. Vitus and from the analogous situation of the Wawel hill in Krakow.

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when I came out of Egypt› (*Ex* 13:8). For this reason we must give thanks, glorify, and bless Him who, for our forefathers and *for us*, operated such prodigies. He led *us* from serfdom to freedom, from sadness to joy, from the darkness to a great light, from slavery to redemption."[17] And the *Targum* in *Ex* 12:42, of the *Codex Neophyti I*, can declare, of Easter night, "it is a night preserved and prepared *for deliverance for all Israelites through their generations*."[18]

The New Testament writings indicate Jesus of Nazareth as the one in whom time has reached its fullness (*Gal* 4:4, *Eph* 1:10, *Heb* 9:26), and the history of salvation – delineated in the Law and the Prophets of Israel – has found its perfect accomplishment[19], extending to embrace every man of every place and time. This extension is well marked by the words of the prophet of Patmos: "I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue (...). They cried out in a loud voice: «Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb»" (*Rev* 7:9-10). It must be observed that such sharing of salvation has been assuming the nature of an experience which, from generation to generation, reproposes itself – beyond space and time – by means of the cult memory: "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me" (*1 Cor* 11:25). The blood of the First Covenant (*Heb* 9:18; see 8:7; 8:13; 9:1; 9:15) has been replaced, therefore, by the blood of the New Covenant, indicated by the *Epistle to the Hebrews* as eternal Covenant (*Heb* 13:20)[20]. And the ritual μνημόσυνον (*zikkaròn*) of Mosaic Easter (*Ex* 12:14)[21] is indicated as completely acquiring reality in the anamnetic rite of the Easter of Christ, *i.e.* in the breaking of the bread (*Acts* 2:42), performed εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν (*1 Cor* 11:24, 25; *Lk* 22:19, in NT GREEK[28], pp. 540, 276). The cultic action is therefore the context in which – to use Bouyer's words (1952: 412) – that μυστήριον "s'exprime et se réalise pour nous," which Paul indicated as "hidden from ages and from generations past, but now manifested to his holy ones" (*Col* 1:26).

4. Mysteric Dimension of the Church and Exegesis in Ambrose

The ancient Church had a lucid awareness of being, as the community of celebration of the Divine Mysteries, the ambit in which the redeeming meeting of man and Christ was realized. And, of this aspect of the Church, Ambrose appears to have been an interpreter of remarkable efficacy.

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[17] *Pesahim*, X, 5, in BABYL. TALMUD$_1$, II, [116a-116b] 727-728; see also BABYL. TALMUD$_2$, p. 116a-b.

[18] See NEOPHYTI I, pp. 77-79 and TARGUM NEOPHYTI 1, pp. 362-368.

[19] "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet" (*Matt* 1:22); in *Matt* see also: 2:5; 2:15; 2:17; 2:23; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 11:13; 12:17; 12:39; 13:35; 21:4; 25:56; 27:9.

[20] See Docherty (2009).

[21] See *Exodus* in SEPTUAGINTA, p. 168; BIBL. HEBR., p. 104.

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In the *Apologia Dauid*, referring to the "sacraments of the celestial mysteries, whose prefiguration image Moses had delineated in the Law,"[22] the Milanese bishop did not hesitate to affirm: "you, o Christ, reveal yourself to me face to face; I take you (*te teneo*) in your sacraments."[23]

In the analysis of the Ambrosian texts, in the wake of interpreting criteria that are essentially philological, there has been a long debate about the matrixes of the Milanese bishop's biblical exegesis, given the diversity – and heterogeneity – of the sources he drew upon. With regard to this, on the other hand, it is worthwhile to point out that Ambrose was primarily a bishop. His fundamental preoccupation was not, therefore, to compose treatises of textual criticism, but rather to introduce the believers to the Divine Mysteries, so that in those Mysteries they could meet Christ. It is no coincidence that a large portion of his literary production shows, directly or indirectly, the reflection of precise cultic moments.

In the beginning of the mystagogy homilies of the Octave of Easter, collected in the *De mysteriis*, Ambrose reminds neophytes that they had been preparing through Lent listening daily to the beautiful and edifying moral examples of the Patriarchs (AMBROSIUS, MYST. I, 1, p. 156): *i.e.*, by listening to an accurate commentary to the *Genesis* text. Well then, precisely to the commentary of that book Ambrose devoted a series of texts (some of which with an evident homiletic nature), which can be considered as an organic corpus: *De Paradiso*, *De Cain et Abel*, *De Noe*, *De Abraham*, *De Isaac uel anima* (to which the *De bono mortis* is somehow linked), the short treatise (more moral than exegetic) *De Iacob et uita beata*, and *De Ioseph*, to which the further short treatise *De patriarchis* must be added.

Taking as a reference point the ritual itinerary toward Easter, we subsequently find the *Exameron* (a collection of sermons of the Holy Week, between 386 and 390, and modeled on the prior homiletic text by Basil)[24], followed – after the "Sacred Triduum"[25] – by the already mentioned mystagogy catechesis established in the *De Mysteriis*.[26]

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[22] "Mysteriorum sacramenta coelestium, quorum typum Moyses praefigurauit in Lege" (in AMBROSIUS, DAV.$_2$, 58, p. 156).

[23] "Facie ad faciem te mihi, Christe, demonstras; te in tuis teneo sacramentis" (*Ibid.*).

[24] AMBROSIUS, HEX., V, 24, pp. 90-91; see BASILIUS, HEX. The idea – already present in the Jewish ambit – of Easter as the new Creation and the Christian concept of Resurrection Day as the Eighth Day, symbol of the eternal day without sunset, naturally led to configure the first six days of the week preceding the Easter solemnity as a reproposition of the six primordial days. Among the texts connected with pre-Easter catechesis, *Explanatio Symboli* was not mentioned due to perplexities regarding its attribution (see the *Introduction* by B. Botte, in AMBROSIUS, MYST., pp. 21-24), also reproposed by Savon and amply shared by Alzati (2015).

[25] As for the concept of Triduum in Ambrose, faithfully continued by the Milanese Church, see AMBROSIUS, EP. XIII, pp. 227-228: "Cum igitur Triduum illud Sacrum in ebdomadam

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The *De Paenitentia* is linked to the penitential discipline, whereas the *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam* is the reflection of the common cultic life.[27]

Such a centrality of the *mysteriorum sacramenta coelestium* explains quite well why it was possible to identify precisely in the mystagogy perspective the unifying principle of Ambrose's entire exegesis, as Christoph Jacob pointed out.[28] And it is in this mysteric perspective that the complex relation between the Old and the New Testament as well, unlikely to be solved with purely philological instruments, finds in Ambrose an organic recomposition.

As the above-mentioned works clearly show, the preaching of the ancient Milanese bishop, in its mysteric foundation, amply focused on the Old-Testament writings: as a matter of fact, they are seen by Ambrose as communicating the unique Christ, similarly to the New-Testament writings. Commenting on *Ps* 1, the bishop spoke thus:

> Drink, therefore, of the first in order to drink of the second too: *it is now time to start the consideration of the mysteries*. First drink the Old Testament, in order to drink the New Testament too. If you haven't drunk the first, you will not be able to drink the second. Drink the first to slacken your thirst, drink the second to reach complete satiety [...]. Drink, therefore, from both cups, the Old and the New Testaments, as in both you drink Christ. Drink Christ, since he is the vine [see *John* 15:1, 5]; drink Christ, since he is the rock that made the water spurt [see *Ex* 17:4-6, *1 Cor* 10:4]; drink Christ, since he is

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proxime concurrat ultimam, intra quod Triduum et passus est et quievit et resurrexit, de quo Triduo ait: «Solvite hoc templum et in triduo resuscitabo illud», quid nobis potest molestiam dubitationis afferre?"

[26] On the non-paternity by St. Ambrose of the *De Sacramentis* see, compiled under the guidance of Hervé Savon, both the THESAURUS (p. XV), and the *CETEDOC Library of Christian Latin Texts*, which put the cited work among the Ambrosian *dubia*. With regard to this, see also the recent Savon (2012). On the other hand, reformers of the 16th century and, in the 17th, Card. Giovanni Bona – as, subsequently, the Benedictines of the French Congrégation de Saint Maur in their tormented edition – had already expressed doubts regarding the traditional attribution to the Milanese bishop; see B. Botte, in AMBROSIUS, SACR., pp. 8-12. In the 20th century such a paternity – defended by publishers Otto Faller (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*) and Bernard Botte (*Sources Chrétiennes*), and also by Mohrmann (1976) – was decidedly refuted, both by the great Baumstark (1904), and by Gamber (1967) who, though with different results, linked the short treatise to Churches that did not belong to the Milanese province but were open to Ambrosian influences.

[27] Bearing witness (sometimes indirectly) to preaching that took place in not well-defined contexts are: *De fuga saeculi* (after a Philonian model), *De Tobia*, *De Helia et ieiunio*, *De Nabuthae* (indebted to Basil), and also the *Explanationes Psalmorum XII* and the *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII*. Clearly aimed at the worship are the *Hymns* (AMBROSIUS, HYMNES), and echoes of cultic contexts can be found in other works as well (see, for instance, "[Spiritus] qui cum Patre et Filio a sacerdotibus [...] in oblationibus invocatur", in AMBROSIUS, SPIR., III, XVIII, 16, 112, p. 197).

[28] About this aspect of the Milanese bishop's exegesis, see Jacob (1990; 1995) and Studer (1997).

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> the source of life [see *Ps* 35:10]; drink Christ since he is the river whose current brightens up the city of God [see *Ps* 45:5]; drink Christ since he is the peace [see *Eph* 2:14]; drink Christ, from whose breast rivers of living water gush forth [see *John* 7:38]; drink Christ, to drink the blood which redeemed you [see *Matt* 26:27-28, *Rev* 5:9].[29]

Significantly, these statements, which configure the Old and the New Testament as two chalices from which to draw the one and same Christ, were enunciated by Ambrose in a mysteric perspective ("hoc enim tempus est ut inseramus mystica"), thus being represented as organically connected with the celebration of the Divine Mysteries.

5. After Ambrose: the Ambrosian Tradition

The unquestioned authority taken on by Ambrose's teachings before his Church has undoubtedly contributed to ensure – within the Milanese context – a certain continuity in time also to the exegetic aspects just mentioned. This is confirmed by a composition of late ancient period: the Easter *Praeconium* still in use in Milan.[30] In this text, indeed, the mysteric celebration is outlined as the place in which the redeeming content pertaining to the Old Testament is reproposed ("quae diversis sunt praefigurata vel gesta temporibus, huius noctis curriculo devoluta supplentur")[31] in the awareness of the fulfillment of salvation that took place in the new and eternal Covenant of Christ ("quae patribus in figura contingebant, nobis in veritate proveniunt")[32], the latter a Covenant that is constantly reproposed in the Church and continually given to the believers in the Divine Mysteries ("ad totius mysterii supplementum Christo vescitur turba fidelium")[33].

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[29] "Bibe ergo primum, ut bibas et secundum – hoc enim tempus est ut inseramus mystica –; bibe primum Vetus Testamentum, ut bibas et Nouum Testamentum. Nisi primum biberis, secundum bibere non poteris. Bibe primum ut sitim mitiges, bibe secundum ut bibendi satietatem haurias... Utrumque ergo poculum bibe Veteris et Noui Testamenti, quia in utroque Christum bibis. Bibe Christum, quia uitis est [see *John* 15:1, 5], bibe Christum, quia petra est quae uomuit aquam [see *Ex* 17:4-6], bibe Christum, quia fons uitae est [see *Ps* 35:10], bibe Christum, quia flumen est, cuius impetus laetificat ciuitatem Dei [see *Ps* 45:5], bibe Christum, quia pax est [see *Eph* 2:14], bibe Christum, quia flumina de uentre eius fluent aquae uiuae [see *John* 7:38], bibe Christum, ut bibas sanguinem quo redemptus es [see *Rev* 5:9]": AMBROSIUS, PS. I, 33, 1. 4-5, pp. 28-29.

[30] The text (*Praeconium Paschale Ambrosianum*, Mediolani: Bertarelli, 1934) was established by Suñol (1934). About the problems connected with the dating of such composition and the vague hypotheses of attribution, see Borella (1964: 404-407).

[31] PRAECONIUM PASCHALE, p. 201. It must be mentioned that in the previous Lenten Sundays there had been a solemn proclamation, with a specific melody, of the following pericopes in *Ex* 20:1-24 (the Decalogue); 34:1-10 (the new Tables of the Law); 34:23-35:1 (Transfiguration of Moses); 14:15-31 (Passage of the Red Sea).

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

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A lexical trace signifying the centrality that, still in the second half of the 11th century, the cultic moment had in the Milanese ecclesial life can be found in the definition *Ambrosianum mysterium*, with which the *scientia Ambrosiana* then defined its ritual tradition.[34] It is a terminology that marks the writing by so-called L(andulf)[35] and, in particular, the *Sermo beati Thome episcopi Mediolani*, a hagiographic text contained in it that reproposes, with characteristics of the wondrous, a safeguarding of the *Ambrosianum mysterium* itself against the Romanization attempts of Charlemagne, king of the Franks, after his conquest of the Lombard kingdom.[36] An eloquent sign of the change of sensibility, which also occurred in Milan because of the new medieval ecclesiastic culture of university imprint, is constituted precisely by the disap-

[34] With regard to the patrimony of knowledge that at the end of the 11th century or at the beginning of the following one was designated with the term *scientia Ambrosiana*, and as for the place of its transmission, *i.e.* the schools attached to the "ecclesia beatae Mariae, quae huius archiepiscopatus... caput extitit et Deo annuente semper existet", L(ANDULFUS)$_1$, II, 35, p. 70 and *foll.*, see – with critical gaps, but a better textual basis – L(ANDULFUS)$_2$, p. 75 and *foll.* On the orientation that characterized such schools in the 11th century see Viscardi (1954: 721 and *foll.*) and Schmidt (1977: 8-10).

[35] As for the problems about the name *Landulfus*, see Busch (1989: 11-12). With regard to the dating of the writing in question, whereas Busch himself, differentiating the last (and, according to him, subsequent) four chapters, is inclined to believe in a compilation year not far from 1075, I personally consider extremely plausible to collocate soon after 1100 the overall compiling of variegated material, largely preceding that date and of various provenance: Alzati (2000: 32-35, 40-41, 44-45). Carmassi seems to have reached similar chronological conclusions, though with other arguments (2000). As for a picture of the dating proposals formulated in the ambit of the historiographical tradition, see also Alzati (1991: note 4), Alzati (1994: note 20), Alzati (1993: 187-188, 212-214). The dating by Jörg Busch has been quietly accepted by German historiography; see Dartmann (2000, and in particular note 168, pp. 120-121) and Zumhagen (2002: 29).

[36] *Sermo beati Thome episcopi Mediolani*, in LIBELLUS DE SITU, pp. 90-95. A parallel "judgment of God" concerning the Ambrosian chant is delineated in the metrical composition edited by Amelli (1913: 153 and *foll.*). On the *Sermo* and the mysterious figure of the "transmontanus episcopus" Eugene, "amator et quasi pater ambrosiani misterii nec non et protector", see Cattaneo (1970), Milani (1971), Alzati (1988), Tomea (1989). Significantly, *mysterium* is the same term employed in the first portion of the 12th century by Pelayo de Oviedo to designate, in his *Liber Chronicorum*, the cultic patrimony of the Churches when the Spanish-Visigoth ritual form was erased – from the Christian and reconquered Spain – by the monarchs of Castile and Leon, with Gregory VII's strong support (CRÓNICA). In the *Chronicon Sancti Maxentii* it is the term *lex* that assumes analogous semantic value: "legem Romanam uoluit introducere et Toletanam mutare" (PINIUS, p. 49). With regard to the theme of the ordeal as a decisive criterion for the disputes in a ritual ambit as well, in the first half of the 13th century it was also reproposed by the Toledan Primate Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, in HISTORIA GOTHICA, pp. 207-209.

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pearance – in the titles of so-called Landulf – of the original term *mysterium* and by its replacement with the much less meaningful *officium*.[37]

Could this be a sign that the aspects of the Ambrosian patrimony, which we have dealt with up to now, are to be considered an experience definitely concluded in the past? It does not seem the case.

On March 20th, 2008, Thursday, *in Hebdomada Authentica*, at the conclusion of the Chrism Mass, the archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, before the clergy and the people gathered into the Cathedral, promulgated the *Ambrosian Lectionary* reformed in compliance with the decrees of the Second Vatican Council.[38] Consciously inserting itself into the continuity of the Ambrosian tradition, the new Lectionary – besides amply reproposing what had been consolidated in time (in some cases a patrimony dating back to a period before Ambrose himself) – in the integrations entailed by the reform work, tends to maintain fidelity to the above-said perspective of mysteric tendency that for centuries characterized the articulation of the Scriptural pericopes in the Milanese Church.

With regard to this it should be observed that in Milan, since the beginning, the readings connected with the Eucharistic celebration (in addition to the Epistle and the Gospel) included the Old Testament *Lectio*.[39] The reintroduction of such elements – after the Second Vatican Council – in the Roman ritual system, from which it had already disappeared in the Late Antiquity, opened vast debates (especially – but not only – in the German area) over the relation between the Old and the New Testaments in the context of the Christian worship. In fact, if such a relation is dealt with through an exclusively philological and textual approach[40], besides perceiving as impending the threat of a "crumbling" of the texts under the impact of historical and critical analysis[41], the risk is to oscillate between the failure to appreciate the specific value (*Eigenwert*) of the Old Testament[42] and diluting the Christian interpretive canon.[43]

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[37] The phenomenon can be found in the ms. *H 89 inf.* of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, going back to the 14th century, while the original terminology was safeguarded in an alternative text, roughly coeval, now in New Haven, Yale University Library, ms. *Beinecke 642*.

[38] The relevant documents are in the volume *Promulgazione del Lezionario Ambrosiano*, Supplemento a *Rivista Diocesana Milanese*, 99/ 3 (2008). Notably, on the Lectionary, after the effective synthesis by Magnoli (2008), see also the miscellaneous volume *Il Lezionario secondo il Rito della Santa Chiesa di Milano*, in *Ambrosius*, 85/ 1 (2009), and the essays by Magnoli (2009) and Valli (2009); for a systematic presentation, see Alzati (2009).

[39] "Pulchre mihi hodie legitur legis exordium" (AMBROSIUS, EXPOSITIO, p. 325).

[40] With regard to the criteria adopted in the Roman Lectionary, see the useful observations of Gafus (1995).

[41] In particular with reference to the Gospel writings, see Martini (2001).

[42] For a comprehensive picture of the problems posed in this respect by the post-council Roman Lectionary, see Kranemann (1995).

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As we saw in Ambrose, it is in the mysteric perspective that the Old and the New Testaments – though maintaining their respective specificity – find a converging accord, as it is in the Divine Mysteries that for each believer – μυστικῶς – the unitary salvation design, announced in both the Testaments, becomes topical (Alzati 1998).

Therefore, following the Fathers and notably Ambrose, the Milanese Church – by means of its renewed cult patrimony – still leads the Christian people to approach the Old and the New Testaments above all in their mysteric reproposition. Under this aspect, we can say it continues the teachings of its ancient pastor, so that every man can relive the experience and can come to affirm with him: "Christe [...] in tuis te inuenio sacramentis."[44]

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[43] For an example of the positions adopted within the ambit of the Old-Testament exegetes, see Zenger (1995a) and Zenger (1995b: 31-36). The issues posed by the hypothesis about Torah readings within the Christian Sunday worship are also worth considering (Braulik 1995). But see also many of the essays in Franz (1997).

[44] Ambrosius, *Apologia Dauid*, 58, in the textual variant of the ms. *B* (Boulogne sur Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. *32*) (6th century), in AMBROSIUS, DAV.1, p. 340; see also AMBROSIUS, DAV.2, p. 156 [*in Apparatu*].

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