

MICHAEL PSELLOS' *THEOLOGICA* I.30 AND THE BYZANTINE INTERPRETATIONS OF *SCALA PARADISI* XXVII/2.13

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ABSTRACT. The article² examines the exegesis of Michael Psellos on the most mysterious of the “difficult places” of the *Ladder* by John of Sinai — Step XXVII/2.13. This interpretation is one of the so-called *Theologica* treatises (Theol. I.30). It differs significantly from the rest of the Byzantine explanations of this “difficult place”. Michael Psellos decisively rejects the Christological interpretation of the “vision” and the questions of St. John. He also develops the doctrine of the accessibility to a human in present life of the vision of God in “symbols” and “forms” only. Higher contemplations are linked to the degree of detachment of the soul from the body. Unlike Michael Psellos, other interpreters, firstly, pay more attention to the context in which the chapter of the *Ladder* in question is located, secondly, they mostly prefer a Christological interpretation of St. John’s questions to the unknown interlocutor, thirdly, they ask themselves who this interlocutor was, an angel or Christ Himself. One of the anonymous Byzantine commentaries convincingly defends the point of view according to which John Climacus talked with Christ. This paper analyses all the extensive interpretations of the difficult passage, and on the basis of the handwritten tradition, draws the conclusion that the exegesis of Michael Psellos had much circulation in Byzantium along with other conceptions of the mysterious chapter. In addition, there has been noted the reception of Psellos’s interpretation in the first Slavic edition of the *Ladder* in 1647. Appendices I and II contain the edition of the Greek text of an anonymous Scholium and a fragment from the commentary by Elias of Crete respectively.

Keywords: Michael Psellos, *Theologica*, John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Photius of Constantinople, Elias of Crete, byzantine commentaries, Church Slavonic translation.

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The writings of Michael Psellos, known as *Theologica*, are often viewed as a kind of analogue to the famous *Ambigua* of St. Maximus Confessor: they often deal with the same authors, and sometimes with the same texts by these authors, as in *Ambigua*. At the same time, Michael Psellos is sometimes inclined to give an interpretation of the respective sayings opposite to that which can be found in Maximus the Confessor. Therefore, *Theologica* at times turns into *Anti-Ambigua*.³ The tendency to give an interpretation that is fundamentally different from the traditional can be seen elsewhere in *Theologica*, where there are considered texts not analysed by St. Maximus.⁴

One such example is the exegesis of one of the chapters of the *Ladder of the Divine Ascent* by St. John of Sinai⁵ (XXVII/2.13) adduced in *Theologica* I.30 Gautier.⁶ Michael Psellos chooses perhaps the most difficult place in the whole *Ladder*, the real *crux desperationis* of translators and commentators, according to Fr. Luigi d'Ayala Valva.⁷ Other Byzantine interpretations of this small chapter have also survived, including those very widespread in the manuscript tradition and reflected in printed publications, which will be discussed further in this article.⁸ What distinguishes almost all of these interpretations, except that suggested by Michael Psellos, is that they unanimously understand the questions asked by the author to an unknown interlocutor as having Christological significance, and only hesitate in identifying this interlocutor (as an angel or as Christ Himself). Michael Psellos follows a completely different path, so it is of interest to consider the place of his interpretation in the Byzantine (and post-Byzantine) tradition of scholia to the *Ladder*. This will be done after a comparatively brief survey of the text by Michael Psellos.

³ Basile Lourié, "Michel Psellos contre Maxime le Confesseur: l'origine de l'« hérésie des physéthésites »", *Scrinium* 4 (2008): 206-207, cf. 207-208, n. 17.

⁴ cf. Frederick Lauritzen, "Psellos the Hesychast. A Neoplatonic reading of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (*Theologica* I.11 Gautier)", *Byzantinoslavica* LXX, no. 1-2 (2012): 175-176; Oleg Rodionov, "Historical and Literary Context of Michael Psellos' *Theologica* 59", *Scrinium* 4 (2008): 228-234.

⁵ CPG 7852; John Chrysostom, *John Climacus: from the Egyptian Desert to the Sinaite Mountain* (London-New York: Routledge, 2019).

⁶ Michaelis Pselli *Theologica* I, ed. P. Gautier (Leipzig: Teubner, 1989): 122-126; CPG 7852, Scholia, (c); cf. Frederick Lauritzen, "Psellos the Hesychast. A Neoplatonic reading of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (*Theologica* I.11 Gautier)", 173; Stratis Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16, 17.

⁷ Giovanni Climaco, *La Scala*, traduzione e noti di Luigi d'Ayala Valva, Introduzione di John Chrysostom (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2005), 423, n. 16; cf. Jean Gouillard, "Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?", in *Byzantium. Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos*, vol. II: Theology and Philology (Athens, 1986), 445.

⁸ The unique article discussing in detail the different ways of interpretation of this chapter in the Byzantine commentary tradition is: Jean Gouillard, "Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?", 445-459.

Before proceeding to the peculiarities of the exegesis of Michael Psellos, we present the text of the chapter the interpretation of which will be discussed below. Michael Psellos himself cites the chapter under interpretation in its whole, and the text given by him has a number of minor differences from the one widespread in the Byzantine manuscript tradition, as well as from the text of printed editions (the discrepancies with Rader's edition are given in the critical apparatus by the editor of *Theologica*, Paul Gautier; below we shall indicate the variant readings with another authoritative edition, as well as with the Byzantine manuscripts of the commented *Ladder* available to us and used later in the scholia analysis).⁹

Psell. *Theol.* 1.30.35–43 Gautier

Sigla

R — Rader, p. 414–415

S — Sophronios, p. 154

B — BSB 297 (XIII–XIV s.), f. 247v–248r

C — Coisl. 87 (XIV s.), f. 272v

‘Μετερχόμενος’ φησὶ ‘τὸ μέσον ἐν τοῖς* μέσοις γέγονα, καὶ ἐφώτιζε* διψῶντα· καὶ ἰδοὺ πάλιν ἦν ἐν ἐκείνοις· τί μὲν ἦν πρὸ τῆς ὁρατῆς αὐτῶ* μορφῆς διδάσκειν οὐκ ἡδύνατο· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἠφίετο ὁ ἄρχων*. πῶς δὲ νῦν πέλει* ἡρώτων λέγειν*. ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις μὲν, ἔλεγεν, ἀλλ’* οὐκ ἐν τούτοις. ἐγὼ δέ· τίς ἡ δεξιὰ στάσις καὶ καθέδρα ἐπὶ τοῦ αἰτίου; ἀδύνατον ἔφη ἀκοῇ μυσταγωγείσθαι ταῦτα*. πρὸς δὲ μοι* ὁ πόθος εἴλκε προσαγαγεῖν* τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ ἡρώτων*. οὕτω ἔφραζεν ἡκειν τὴν ὥραν* δι’ ἔλλειψιν πυρὸς ἀφθαρσίας. ταῦτα εἴτε σὺν τῷ χοῖ* οὐκ οἶδα, εἶδε τοῦτου χωρὶς λέγειν εἰσάπαν οὐκ ἔχω’.¹⁰

⁹ See a similar collation: Jean Gouillard, “Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?”, 446.

¹⁰ Cf. authoritative English and French translations respectively:

a) John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, transl. by Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (London: Paulist Press, 1982), 268: “I myself was occupied with the second of these tasks and entered the intermediate stage. A light came to me as I was thirsting and I ask there what the Lord was before He took visible form. The angel could not tell me because he was not permitted to do so. So, I asked him: ‘In what state is He now?’ and the answer was that He was in the state appropriate to Him, though not to us. ‘What is the nature of the standing and sitting at the right hand of the Father?’ I asked. ‘Such mysteries cannot be taken in by the human ear’, he replied. Then I pleaded with him right then to bring me where my heart was longing to go, but he said that the time was not yet ripe, since the fire of incorruption was not yet mighty enough with me. And whether, during all this, I was in the body or out of it, I cannot rightly say (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2).”

τοῖς] om. **R S** || ἐφώτιζε] ἐφώτιζέ με **S C** || αὐτῷ] ἐν ante αὐτῷ add. **R** ὁ ἄρχων **S C** om. **B** || ὁ ἄρχων] om. **S C** || πέλει] ὑπάρχει **S C** || ἡρώτων λέγειν] λέγειν ἐδεόμην **S C** || ἔλεγεν ἀλλ' ἔλεγε καὶ **S** || ταῦτα] ante μυσταγωγείσθαι trsp. **S C** || μοι] με **R S C** || προσαγαγεῖν] προσάγαγε **S** (cf. Ἐν ἄλλ(οις) προσαγαγεῖν in marg. **S**) πρόσαγε εἶπον **C** || ἡρώτων] εἶπον **S** μαθεῖν add. **B** om. **C** || ὥραν] ἐκείνην add. **C**

Michael Psellos, as one can see, set down his commentary in response to the requests of his disciples (which is generally typical for the texts included in the *Theologica*), but he points out that it would be easier for him to teach something that requires apodictic or dialectical research. Resorting to the division of “all scripture, both divinely inspired and the rest of the external”, into “didactic” (διδακτικόν) and “leading to perfection” (τελεστικόν), Psellos points out that only the former is perceived “by the ear”, while the latter requires illumination (ἐλλαμψις) experienced by the mind.¹¹ This latter kind of texts Michael Psellos (with reference to Aristotle, frg. 15 Ross) calls μυστηριῶδες, comparable to what used to occur in the Eleusinian Mysteries. It is about “imprinting” the mind with contemplation, which does not require “learning”, but is perceived immediately.¹² Michael Psellos makes it clear that the text he is going to interpret belongs precisely to the second type. Thus, what is meant is an “ineffable vision” (ἄρρητος ἡ θεά), when the senses are insensible,¹³ and this vision is likened to those awarded to the Apostle Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 12, 2-4), Moses, the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah.¹⁴

Michael Psellos also includes John Climacus among such contemplators.¹⁵ Psellos makes it clear that the place he is about to interpret is difficult for many and has not yet been successfully resolved (ὁποῖον δὴ καὶ τοῦτο τυγχάνει τὸ

b) Jean Gouillard, “Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?”, 458-459: “Je m’adonnais à ce-qui-est-au-milieu quand je me trouvai au-milieu-de-ces choses-du-milieu, et il répandait la lumière sur celui qui était altéré (d’elle). Et voici qu’à nouveau j’étais parmi ces-choses-là.

Ce qu’il était antérieurement à sa forme visible, de me l’apprendre il n’avait pas pouvoir, aussi bien le Maître ne le permettait pas.

Dans quel état se trouve-t-il à présent ? je le priai de me le dire. Dans les modalités qui sont siennes, et non point dans celles-ci, fut sa réponse.

Moi, alors: Que signifient la station et la session à droite par rapport au Principe ? Impossible, dit-il, d’être initié à ces choses-là par l’ouïe.

Je lui demandai alors de me porter à ce vers quoi me tirait mon amour. Il me répondit que l’heure n’était pas encore venue, parce qu’il me manquait encore du feu de l’incorruption. Cela, fut-ce uni à cette poussière ? je ne sais. Fut-ce délivrer d’elle ? Je ne saurais du tout le dire.”

¹¹ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.6-11 Gautier.

¹² Psell. *Theol.* I.30.11-13 Gautier.

¹³ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.19-20 Gautier.

¹⁴ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.20-22 Gautier.

¹⁵ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.22-27 Gautier.

παρὰ πολλῶν μὲν ἀπορούμενον, μηδέπω δὲ τυχὸν ἐπικρίσεως).¹⁶ It should be noted that Michael Psellos makes a mysterious inaccuracy here: he says that Theodoret of Cyrus “did not pay attention to this saying”, which, according to the editor’s correct remark, is an obvious error.¹⁷ But what is the origin of this error? It is possible that among the scholia to the *Ladder* available to Psellos, there were also fragments of works by more ancient authors illustrating certain thoughts of John of Sinai. There are indeed quite a few of such, e. g. by St. Basil of Caesarea, Mark the Hermit and others; fragments of the works of Theodoret could also be found among this kind of scholia.¹⁸ It is also possible however that the mistake of Michael Psellos who attributed the interpretation of the respective place of the *Ladder* to Theodoret of Cyrus, may be due to the perception of Photios’s text¹⁹ as belonging to Theodoret: after all, in *Amphilochia* it is framed by the solutions of difficult passages retrieved from Theodoret!²⁰

Let us now consider the actual interpretation of the chapter of the *Ladder*. Michael Psellos pays no attention to the context in which the first words of this chapter are said: “Passing the middle I ended up in the middle” (μετερχόμενος τὸ μέσον ἐν τοῖς μέσοις γέγονα).²¹ This is quite typical for this author and distinguishes him from Patriarch Photios who in his exegesis of the same place of the *Ladder* (as elsewhere in his *Amphilochia*), on the contrary, is sensitive to the context and correctly indicates that the “middle” in this chapter means the third of the “deeds of *hesychia*” mentioned in the previous chapter, namely “urgent prayer” (προσευχὴ ἄοκνος).²² This feature is also noted by other interpreters.²³ Psellos, though, endeavours to connect this “middle” with the “average and moderate” virtues (μέσα καὶ μέτρια).²⁴ He cites the division of virtues, originating in Porphyry,²⁵ into practical (or “civil”), contemplative, mental and exemplary (πρακτικαὶ καὶ θεωρητικαὶ καὶ νοερὰ καὶ παραδειγματικαὶ).²⁶

Thus, according to Michael Psellos, John Climacus surpassed the practical virtue and “purifying himself and moving away from the body” (ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος καθαιρόμενος καὶ πόρρω γινόμενος), found himself at the middle level corresponding

¹⁶ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.27-29 Gautier.

¹⁷ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.29-30 Gautier.

¹⁸ E.g., Sancti patris nostri Ioannis Scholastici..., *Opera omnia*, ed. Matthaeus Rader (Paris, 1633), 428 (scholium 41).

¹⁹ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273 Westerink; cf. Jean Gouillard, “Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?”, 454: Psellos “a certainement lu la dissertation photienne”.

²⁰ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 249-272 and 274-281 Westerink.

²¹ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.46 Gautier.

²² Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.16-23 Westerink; cf. Κλίμαξ τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου, καθηγουμένου τοῦ Σιναίου Ὁπου, ed. Sophronios [Rhaidestinos] (Constantinople, 1883), 154 (Chapter 12).

²³ Cf., e.g.: BSB 297, f. 246v; Coisl. 87, f. 273r (see Appendices I and II below).

²⁴ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.46-49 Gautier.

²⁵ Cf. Porph. *Sent.* 32.

²⁶ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.60-61 Gautier.

to the contemplative and mental virtues. Therefore, the “average contemplations” became available to him.²⁷

Michael Psellos does not dwell in any detail on the question that worried other commentators (albeit to varying degrees): who is that mysterious interlocutor with whom St. John Climacus has his unusual dialogue?²⁸ However, understanding the “style” of the chapter’s narration as undoubtedly “dialogical” (ὥσπερ ἐν ἀνθρωποσίσαις ἢ τοῦ χωρίου ὑφ’ ἡ), Psellos cannot say anything about the second “person” of the dialogue.²⁹ Since the contemplator is usually instructed in the sacraments (μυσταγωγῶσαι) by “powers” (δυνάμεις) — apparently angelic beings —, in this case as well, according to Psellos, such a “power” is at work, to which the questions are addressed.³⁰

Addressing himself to the interpretation of the questions and especially the answers to them of the mysterious power, Michael Psellos completely abandons the Christological understanding thereof, so characteristic, as we shall see, for other Byzantine commentators of the *Ladder*. As to the question what He was like “before the visible form” (πρὸ τῆς ὁρατῆς αὐτῷ μορφῆς), Psellos understands it as referring to the possibility of seeing God without symbols and appearances,³¹ seeing Him as He is.³² The “average visions” are treated by him precisely as visions “in symbols and appearances” (ἐν συμβόλοις τισὶ καὶ ἰνδάλμασι),³³ similar to those contemplated by Ezekiel, for example. The numerous symbols proper to the visions of this prophet (the “appearance of bezek,” chariot, wheels...) ³⁴ are directly listed by Michael Psellos as referring to the “average contemplations” with symbols and images.³⁵ Like the other interpreters of the *Ladder*, Psellos takes the story about John’s interlocutor being “unable” to explain to him what he wanted to know, not as evidence of the former’s lack of knowledge, but of the impossibility for the questioner to perceive the “intelligible” without symbols — for lack of relevant capacities.³⁶

In the same vein interprets Michael Psellos the subsequent questions of John and the answers of the mysterious interlocutor. Everything the interpretation said about before is not the “proper” appearance of God. For God does not dwell in temples made with hands (cf. Act 7, 48) or “in impressions and shapes” (ἐν

²⁷ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.65-68 Gautier.

²⁸ Cf. Jean Gouillard, “Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?”, 455.

²⁹ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.44-45, 69-72 Gautier.

³⁰ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.72-75 Gautier.

³¹ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.95 Gautier.

³² Psell. *Theol.* I.30.88-89 Gautier.

³³ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.84 Gautier.

³⁴ Cf. Ez. 1:4.14.16.

³⁵ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.84-88 Gautier.

³⁶ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.94-95 Gautier.

διατυπώσεσιν τισι καὶ πλάσμασι).³⁷ Accordingly, at the “middle level” He is contemplated in “corporeal symbols” (σύμβολα ... σωματικά),³⁸ which make the comprehension of God easier to those who are not able to gaze at the truth directly and therefore need a “mirror” and “riddle” (cf. 1 Cor. 13, 12).³⁹ John asks to explain to him what “standing and sitting at the right hand of the Cause” (ἐπὶ τοῦ αἰτίου), i.e. God, means, but Psellos thinks it to be inaccessible to the “hearing” of the questioner, because he has not yet grasped the mysterious meaning of “standing” and “sitting” and their differences which are unattainable “even to the naked mind” (τὰ μηδὲ γυμνῷ τῷ νῷ χωρητά).⁴⁰

Since the mysterious interlocutor, despite John's persistence, refused to explain the above-mentioned mystery to him saying that “the time has not yet come (to comprehend it) — due to the lack of incorruption fire (with the questioner)”, Michael Psellos devotes the last part of his exegesis to the explanation what the incorruption of the soul is — based on Plato.⁴¹ Quite predictably, he explains that the depth of knowledge of God directly depends on how much the soul has freed itself from “mixing” with the body, how far it has “moved away” from it. Only with the utmost “liberation” of the soul from the bonds of the body, when its subtle and “ethereal” nature is revealed, one becomes able to transcend the “figures” and see God irrespective of shapes and impressions.⁴²

Concluding his interpretation of the chapter from the *Ladder*, Psellos states that the solution of all the difficulties that it conceals requires a deeper theological “learning”, but prefers to finish the word by indicating that the reason for both the visions and their explanations are εἰκόσματα — ‘conjectures’.⁴³

Thus, Michael Psellos gives an emphatically non-Christological interpretation of Chapter 13 of the second part of Word 27 of the *Ladder*. The problem of the “personality” of John Climacus's interlocutor — is it an angel or Christ Himself? — is not something Psellos is particularly concerned with, either. Both things distinguish the interpretation of Psellos from most of the Byzantine interpretations of the mentioned text known today.⁴⁴ Now is the time to consider other Byzantine commentaries on this difficult passage.

³⁷ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.104-105 Gautier.

³⁸ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.101-103 Gautier.

³⁹ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.107-108 Gautier.

⁴⁰ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.109-119 Gautier.

⁴¹ Plat. *Phaed.* 66 b 5, 67 a 5, 83 a 7-8.

⁴² Psell. *Theol.* I.30.120-146 Gautier.

⁴³ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.152-158 Gautier.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jean Gouillard, “Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?”, 449-450.

The *Ladder* of St. John of Sinai is one of the few works of Byzantine ecclesiastical literature, on which lengthy commentaries were composed.⁴⁵ There are two such commentaries which represent a consistent interpretation of most of the chapters of the *Ladder*: one by Elias of Crete (12th century),⁴⁶ the other by the famous Byzantine writer Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (14th century).⁴⁷ Both use the commentaries of a fairly large number of authors of previous centuries, but extremely rarely indicate where this or that interpretation was taken from, and avoid mentioning names.⁴⁸ The numerous scholia⁴⁹ usually located on the margins of Byzantine manuscripts, on the contrary, often bear the inscription of names. Before analysing the complex of texts that make up the exegesis to the chapter under consideration in the commentary of Elias of Crete (the corresponding explanations in that by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos are not of particular interest),⁵⁰ let us turn to the scholia tradition. Firstly, among the scholia to the *Ladder*, there are a number of interpretations by Patriarch Photios,⁵¹ including a relatively detailed explanation of Chapter 13 of Step XXVII/2. This commentary was published as early as 1892 by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus as composed by Photios.⁵²

The latest edition of Photios' *Amphilochia* has confirmed at least the attribution of the interpretation of Chapter 13:⁵³ it corresponds to the main body of Treatise 273 from *Amphilochia*.⁵⁴ This important text will be discussed below. Secondly, it is apparently the anonymous scholium, later abbreviated in the authoritative Greek edition of the *Ladder* by monk Sophronios, which became the most widespread.⁵⁵ (In Appendix I to this article, I present the edition of the

⁴⁵ Fr. Maximos Constas, "Introduction", in St. Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios*, transl. by Fr. Maximos Constas (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 53-54, n. 169.

⁴⁶ CPG 7852, Scholia, (a).

⁴⁷ CPG 7852, Scholia, (d); PLP no. 20826.

⁴⁸ Theodora Antonopoulou, "The 'Brief Exegesis of John Climacus' Heavenly Ladder" by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. Remarks on its Nature and Sources", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 57 (2007): 152-153, 155-156.

⁴⁹ Cf. CPG 7852, Scholia, (e), (f).

⁵⁰ Theodora Antonopoulou, "The 'Brief Exegesis of John Climacus' Heavenly Ladder" by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. Remarks on its Nature and Sources", 161-166.

⁵¹ Cf. CPG 7852, Scholia, (b).

⁵² Φωτίου πατριάρχου Σχόλια εἰς τὰς πνευματικὰς πλάκας Ἰωάννου τοῦ τῆς Κλίμακος, συλλεγένητα ἐκ τοῦ 93 κώδικος τῶν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις χειρογράφων τῆς μονῆς τοῦ τιμίου Σταυροῦ τῶν Ἰβήρων, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik* 31, t. XI, issue 1 (1892): 21-24; cf. G. Hofman, "Der hg. Johannes Klimax bei Photios," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 7 (1941): 461-479.

⁵³ Φωτίου πατριάρχου Σχόλια εἰς τὰς πνευματικὰς πλάκας Ἰωάννου τοῦ τῆς Κλίμακος, 23.13-24.32.

⁵⁴ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.17-55 Westerink.

⁵⁵ Κλίμαξ τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου, καθηγουμένου τοῦ Σιναίου Ὁρους, ed. Sophronios [Rhaidestinos], 154-155, n. 2.

Greek text based on the manuscript BSB 297 and reproduce in parallel the text of Sophronios's note.) This interpretation became popular most likely because it demonstrates (in contrast to the explanation of Michael Psellos) attention to the context, contains a direct identification of the mysterious interlocutor of the author of the *Ladder* with an angel (later this interpretation would be reflected in many interpretative translations into new languages including English and Russian),⁵⁶ as well as a strictly Christological interpretation of the questions John asks in this chapter. E.g., the first question is interpreted quite unambiguously: "What form did Christ have before *oikonomia* (i.e. before the Incarnation)?" (ποιίας πρὸ τῆς οἰκονομίας μορφῆς ἣν ὁ Χριστός).⁵⁷ The angel's refusal to give an answer is explained not by the inaccessibility of the mystery for the questioner, but by the fact that the former does not know the answer (τοῦτο καὶ αὐτὸς ἡγνόνει), since "the Deity is by essence unknown even to the angels themselves" (Ἡ γὰρ θεότης οὐσίᾳ φησὶν, καὶ αὐτοῖς ἀγγέλοις ἄγνωστος ἐστίν).⁵⁸ However, there is also an interpretation of the "prince" (ἄρχων) as a mind (νοῦς)⁵⁹ that, until it has renounced the body, cannot look at the "naked visions" (γυμνοῖς προσβάλλειν τοῖς θεωρήμασιν), which partly resembles the reasoning of Psellos;⁶⁰ however, the scholiast does not develop this matter further.

The second question is also presented in an unambiguous form: "How does Christ exist now?" (πῶς νῦν ὁ Χριστὸς ὑπάρχει). The answer in the commentator's interpretation is also unambiguous: he interprets the words "in what is His" (or "proper [to Him]", ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις) as "in deity and humanity" (ἐν θεότητι καὶ ἀνθρωπότητι), but devoid of the fluidity and corruptibility characteristic of man now.⁶¹ And finally, the third question about "sitting and standing at the right hand" is also understood as referring to specific New Testament expressions,⁶² and it is again about Christ. The lack of "incorruption fire" is interpreted as the non-involvement (non-implication) of the questioner in "future incorruptibility" (τῆς μελλούσης ἀφθαρσίας): those who still wear flesh cannot see otherwise than "by sight" (δι' εἶδους) (2 Cor. 5:7) and "in a mirror dimly" (1 Cor. 13:12).⁶³

Obviously, this scholium is one of the simplest and relatively consistent explanations for a difficult passage. Let it be added that the scholium got much circulation in the Slavic manuscript tradition and was transferred from there to

⁵⁶ Cf. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 54 (Introduction by Kallistos Ware) and 268.

⁵⁷ BSB 297, f. 246v.

⁵⁸ BSB 297, f. 246v - 247r.

⁵⁹ Cf. Jean Guillaud, "Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?", 451-452.

⁶⁰ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.118-119, 133-144 Gautier.

⁶¹ BSB 297, f. 247v.

⁶² Lc. 22:69; Act. 7:56.

⁶³ BSB 297, f. 248r - 248v.

the first edition of the *Ladder* in Church Slavonic (Moscow, 1647).⁶⁴ The translation of the scholium in this edition is broadly consistent with the Greek text published below in Appendix I. The most complete collection of the Byzantine exegesis of the *Ladder* XXVII/2.13 is contained in the commentary by Elias of Crete, unfortunately not yet published.⁶⁵ I have used the codex Coisl. 87 (14th century), one of the most authoritative manuscripts containing this commentary.⁶⁶ The composition of the commentary on Chapter 13 is remarkable: it opens with the scholium of Photios, the author of which is not named, though (all the texts in this interpretation are anonymous). It is quoted almost in full, with the exception of the beginning of the respective treatise from *Amphilochia*.⁶⁷ As noted above, Photios is attentive to the context (as well as, indeed, the scholiast whose interpretation has just been analysed), he rightly points out that the “middle” that the narrator “went through” is undoubtedly the “urgent prayer” (from Chapter 12).⁶⁸ However, the explanation proper is essentially an expanded retelling of the chapter with explanations that are quite difficult to understand and allow, in turn, various interpretations.

St. John is enlightened here by the very “fulfilment of the luminous vision, and the enjoyment of it, and its contemplation” (ἡ τοῦ σελασφόρου θεάματος πλήρωσις καὶ τρυφή καὶ θέα),⁶⁹ while the interlocutor is called “the architect of our unspeakable pleasure and contemplation” (ὁ ταύτης ἡμῖν τῆς ἀπορρήτου τρυφῆς καὶ θεωρίας ἀρχιτέκτων).⁷⁰ Nothing in Photios’s interpretation indicates that he perceives the questions of St. John as referring to the state of Christ before the Incarnation and after the Ascension. Rather, it is about a certain vision, possibly symbolic,⁷¹ the “Christological content” of which can only be assumed.⁷² The refusal of the interlocutor to answer the questions is explained by the inability of the questioner to perceive what is done by grace which made it possible to contemplate, but the contemplation itself was above understanding;⁷³ the lack of “incorruption fire” is only stated but not explained.⁷⁴

⁶⁴ Lestvica (Moscow, 1647), f. 249r - 250r.

⁶⁵ Theodora Antonopoulou, “The “*Brief Exegesis* of John Climacus’ *Heavenly Ladder*” by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. Remarks on its Nature and Sources”, 155-156.

⁶⁶ Theodora Antonopoulou, “The “*Brief Exegesis* of John Climacus’ *Heavenly Ladder*” by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. Remarks on its Nature and Sources”, 157.

⁶⁷ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.16-55 Westerink.

⁶⁸ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.16-23 Westerink.

⁶⁹ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.24-25 Westerink.

⁷⁰ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.31-32 Westerink; cf. Jean Gouillard, “Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?”, 450.

⁷¹ Cf. Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.35-36 Westerink.

⁷² Cf., however, Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.33-34 Westerink.

⁷³ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.29-31 Westerink.

⁷⁴ Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.48-49 Westerink.

The text which follows the interpretation of Photios in the commentary of Elias of Crete (Coisl. 87, f. 273r - 274r; see the edition based on this manuscript in Appendix II), unfortunately could not be attributed. In general, this interpretation goes in line with what was considered above as the most common (see also Appendix I), however, it also has a number of significant differences. The most important thing is that the unknown scholiast flatly refuses to consider the mysterious interlocutor of St. John in Chapter 13 as an angel.⁷⁵ In his opinion (reinforced with a reference to John Chrysostom),⁷⁶ what the dialogue is about in this chapter concerns the uncreated divine nature, and seeing and knowing something is possible only when being of the same nature.⁷⁷ From this it is concluded that St. John of the Ladder was enlightened by the Only Begotten Logos (f. 273v).⁷⁸ His refusal to answer the first question of John is explained, as in Psellos, by the feebleness of the questioner and not by the lack of divine power in the instructor.⁷⁹ The questions themselves are unambiguously interpreted as relating to the state of Christ before the Incarnation ("What was God-Man Logos before the human form?" — Τί ἦν πρὸ τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μορφῆς ὁ Θεάνθρωπος Λόγος)⁸⁰ and after the Ascension ("How does He now abide after the Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven?" — πῶς νῦν ὑπάρχει μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν καὶ τὴν εἰς οὐρανοῖς ἀνάληψιν).⁸¹

The answer of the mysterious interlocutor to the second question ("in what is His") is unambiguously interpreted, as in the anonymous scholium discussed above, as indicating that after the Ascension, the Son of God abides in His two natures, but not in fluidity and corruptibility characteristic of human nature in this life (cf. the anonymous scholium),⁸² rather in an imperishable body which has become, according to Gregory the Theologian, "one with God" (ὁμόθεον⁸³ — in the manuscript, evidently erroneously, ὁμόθρονον⁸⁴ — 'sitting on the same throne'). The answer itself is described as refuting the delusions of the Manichaeans. "Sitting and standing at the right hand" is also associated by the exegete with the New Testament visions.⁸⁵ The interpretation ends with a

⁷⁵ Cf. Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 2, part 3: The Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch from 451 to 600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 124, n. 346.

⁷⁶ Cf. Jo. Chrys. *De incompr.*, Hom. 5.248-249 Malingrey (cf. Hom. 3.194-196 Malingrey).

⁷⁷ Coisl. 87, f. 273r.

⁷⁸ Coisl. 87, f. 273v; cf. Jean Gouillard, "Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?", 456-457.

⁷⁹ Coisl. 87, f. 273v.

⁸⁰ Coisl. 87, f. 273v.

⁸¹ Coisl. 87, f. 273v.

⁸² BSB 297, f. 247v.

⁸³ Greg. Naz. *In Sanctum Pascha*, Or. 45, 13, PG 36, 641A.

⁸⁴ Coisl. 87, f. 274r.

⁸⁵ Lc. 22:69; Act. 7:56; cf. BSB 297, f. 247v.

repetition of the last lines of Photios's commentary.⁸⁶ As one can see, the examined interpretation has features in common with the anonymous scholium, but the latter can hardly be considered an abridged presentation of the former.

The most interesting from the angle of the topic of this article is, of course, the continuation of the commentary on the *Ladder*, XXVII/2.13 in cod. Coisl. 87: on f. 274r – 275r, the analysed interpretation is immediately followed by that of Michael Psellos. It is introduced by the words: “Or like this (it may as well be interpreted)” (ἢ καὶ οὕτως).⁸⁷ The interpretation begins with the words χρή τοίνυν εἰδέναι ἡμᾶς...,⁸⁸ that is, the preamble and the text of Chapter 13 quoted by Psellos are omitted, while the interpretation proper is given almost in full.⁸⁹ Thus, the commentary of Elias of Crete on the *Ladder* by John of Sinai also included, as an alternative, secondary it seems, the interpretation of Michael Psellos, which granted that work a long life outside the rare *Theologica*. Moreover, the interpretation of Psellos was included in the above-mentioned Moscow edition of the *Ladder* in Church Slavonic, here, on the contrary, coming first and being entitled “*Tolkovanie premudrago Psela*” — “The Interpretation of the Sage Psel(l)os”.⁹⁰

Thus, the above makes it possible to conclude that Michael Psellos's interpretation of the *Ladder* XXVII/2.13, despite all its unusualness and an obvious departure from the seemingly “literal”, “Christological” explanation, was adopted by the Byzantine tradition of commentaries on this monastic handbook — perhaps precisely because of its unusualness. In the commentary of Elias of Crete, it supplements the “Christological” interpretation and, one might say, coexists with the explanation of the same difficult passage given by another Byzantine encyclopedist, Patriarch Photios. From the Byzantine exegetic tradition, it passed over to Slavic manuscripts whence it was retrieved by the publishers of the Moscow *Ladder*, in which Psellos's explanation appears as the main or anyhow the first one. In that manner, one of the most unusual texts of Psellos also got to be used by Slavic monasticism and was read at least in Russia within the commentary on the *Ladder* well after the 17th century.

⁸⁶ Coisl. 87, f. 274r; cf. Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.46-55 Westerink.

⁸⁷ Coisl. 87, f. 274r.

⁸⁸ Psell. *Theol.* I.30.46-47 Gautier.

⁸⁹ Cf. Psell. *Theol.* I.30.46-158 Gautier.

⁹⁰ Lestvica (Moscow, 1647), f. 246r - 249r.

Appendix I

An Anonymous Scholium

Sigla

B — BSB 297 (XIII–XIV s.), f. 246v–248v

S — *Κλίμαξ* τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου, καθηγουμένου τοῦ Σιναίου Ὁρους. Ed. Sophronios [Rhaidestinos]. Constantinople, 1883: 154–155, n. 2

B	S
<p>{Ερμηνεία:} Αίνιττεται ὁ πατήρ, ὃ ἐν ἐκστάσει τεθέσται προσευχόμενος. μέσον γὰρ ἀμεριμνίας καὶ ἐργασίας καρδιακῆς, τὴν προσευχὴν εἶναι ἀπηριθμήσατο· ἦν μετερχόμενος, ἐν μέσοις λέγει γεγονέναι· ἤγουν ἀγγέλοις, τοῖς μέσοις οὖσι θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώποις. οἱ καὶ τοὺς τὴν θείαν χάριν διψῶντας, διὰ τοῦ φωτισμοῦ κορεννύουσι· καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἅκροις περιφυλάττουσι, τῇ ἀμεριμνίᾳ φημί καὶ τῇ ἐργασίᾳ. ὅφ' ὧν ἐν τῇ θεωρίᾳ ἡρώτων φησί, ποίας πρὸ τῆς οἰκονομίας μορφῆς ἦν ὁ Χριστός. καὶ ἐφεστῶς φησὶν ὁ ἄγγελος, διψῶντα με μανθάνειν ἐφώτιζε. τῆς δὲ ἀπορίας, πάντῃ οὐκ ἀπήλαττεν, ἀλλὰ πάλιν ἤμην ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις ἀπορήμασιν. ἐρωτῶντος γάρ μου φησὶν ἐν τῇ θεωρίᾳ, τί ἦν πρὸ τῆς οἰκονομίας ὁ Χριστός, καὶ τίς ἡ τούτου μορφή, τοῦτο καὶ αὐτὸς ἠγνόει. ἡ γὰρ θεότης [f. 247v] οὐσία φησὶν, καὶ αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἀγγέλοις, ἄγνωστός ἐστιν. [...] ⁹¹</p> <p>{Ἀπὸ τῆς ἐρμηνείας:} Ἄλλως τε, οὐδὲ ὁ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἄρχων νοῦς, ἠφίετο, διὰ τὸ ἔτι συνδεδέσθαι τῷ σώματι, γυμνοῖς προσβάλλειν τοῖς θεωρήμασιν. εἴτα τοῦ προτέρου ἀστοχήσας, καὶ πῶς νῦν ὁ Χριστὸς ὑπάρχει ἡρώτων. ὁ δὲ ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳ μὲν ἔλεγεν· ἤγουν ἐν θεότητι καὶ</p>	<p>Μετερχόμενος τὸ μέσον, ἦτοι τὴν ἄοκνον προσευχὴν, ἣτις ἐστὶ μέσον τῆς ἀμεριμνίας, καὶ καρδιακῆς ἐργασίας, ἐν μέσοις γέγονα, φησὶν· ἦτοι ἐν τοῖς Ἀγγέλοις, ἀρπαγείς τῇ θεωρίᾳ· οἵτινες Ἄγγελοι μέσον θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων εἰσὶ, καὶ τοὺς τὴν θείαν χάριν διψῶντας διὰ φωτισμοῦ κορεννύουσι· καὶ ἐφεστῶς, φησὶν, Ἄγγελος, διψῶντά με μανθάνειν, ἐφώτιζε, τῆς δὲ ἀπορίας πάντῃ οὐκ ἀπήλαττε· ἐρωτῶντός μου γάρ, φησὶν, ἐν τῇ θεωρίᾳ· τί ἦν πρὸ τῆς ἐνσάρκου οἰκονομίας ὁ Χριστός; καὶ τίς ἡ τούτου θεία μορφή; ἀπεκρίνατο, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ἠγνόει τοῦτο· ἡ γὰρ τῆς θεότητος οὐσία, φησί, καὶ αὐτοῖς τοῖς Ἀγγέλοις ἄγνωστος ὑπάρχει· ἄλλως τε δέ, καὶ ὁ ἐν ἐμοὶ νοῦς, διὰ τὸ ἔτι συνδεδέσθαι τῷ σώματι οὐκ ἠδύνατο γυμνοῖς προσβάλλειν τοῖς θεωρήμασιν· εἴτα τοῦ προτέρου ἀστοχήσας, ἡρώτων· καὶ πῶς νῦν ὑπάρχει ὁ Χριστός; ὁ δέ, ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳ μὲν ἔλεγεν, ἤγουν ἐν θεότητι καὶ ἀνθρωπότητι, πλὴν οὐκ ἐν ῥεύσει καὶ φθορᾷ, καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς. Καὶ αὖθις δὲ ἐπηρώτων· πῶς ὁ μὲν τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν καθῆσθαι τοῦτόν φησι, Στέφανος δέ, ἐκ δεξιῶν ἵστασθαι τῆς δυνάμεως; ὁ δὲ μυσταγωγὸς καὶ ταύτης με τῆς ζητήσεως ἀπολύων, οὐ δυνατόν, ἔφη, σωματικῇ ἀκοῇ ταῦτα χωρηθῆναι. Πάλιν δὲ</p>

⁹¹ Thus, I am marking the omitted fragments of the text of the *Ladder* itself.

<p>ἀνθρωπότητι· πλὴν οὐκ ἐν ῥεύσει καὶ φθορᾷ καθὼς καὶ ὑμεῖς. καὶ αὐθις δὲ ἐπειρώτων· πῶς ὁ μὲν, τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν, καθῆσθαι τοῦτον φησί,⁹² Στέφανος δέ, ἐκδεξιῶν ἵστασθαι τῆς δυνάμεως;⁹³ ὁ δὲ μυσταγωγὸς ἄγγελος, καὶ ταύτης με τῆς ζητήσεως [f. 248r] ἀπολύων, οὐ δυνατόν ἔφη, σωματικῇ ἀκοῇ ταῦτα χωρηθῆναι. πάλιν δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ πόθου μοι νυττομένῳ, καὶ καταλαβέσθαι τι τῆς ὑπερουσίου μεγαλειότητος ἐπιζητοῦντι, ἐκεῖνος ἔλεγεν. [...] {Ἀπὸ τῆς ἐξηγήσεως;} Οὐπω τῆς φθορᾶς ἀπολυθέντα σε, οὐδὲ τῆς μελλούσης ἀφθαρσίας ἀξιωθέντα, ἀλλ' ἔτι τὴν σάρκα φοροῦντα, ἀδύνατον τὰ τοιαῦτα γνῶναι. βλέπομεν γάρ φησιν ὁ ἀπόστολος νῦν, διὰ εἰδους, καὶ [f. 248v] ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ καὶ ἐν αἰνίγματι· τότε δέ, πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον. ταῦτα φησὶν εἶδον καὶ ἤκουσα· εἴτε ἐν σώματι ὦν, εἴτε τοῦ σώματος ἐκστὰς ἀκριβῶς οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι.</p>	<p>ὑπὸ πόθου μοι νυττομένῳ, καὶ καταλαβέσθαι τι τῆς ὑπερουσίου μεγαλειότητος ἐπιζητοῦντι, ἐκεῖνος, οὐπω, ἔφραζεν, ἤκειν τὴν ὥραν, διὰ τὸ μήπω τῆς μετουσίας τῆς ἀφθαρσίας ἀξιωθῆναι. Ταῦτα, εἴτε σὺν τῷ χοῦ, ἤγουν σὺν τῷ σώματι, εἴτε τούτου χωρὶς, λέγειν εἰσάπαν οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι.</p>
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⁹² Cf. Lc. 22:69.

⁹³ Cf. Act. 7:56.

Appendix II

An Anonymous Fragment from the Commentary by Elias of Crete

C — Coisl. 87 (XIV s.), f. 273r-274r

Ὅτι μὲν οὖν προσευχὴ τὸ μέσον ἐκατέρων τούτων τῶν ἄκρων ἐστὶ φανερόν. ταύτην οὖν τὴν προσευχὴν μετὰ τὴν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ πάντων τούτων ἀπόθεσιν, καὶ τὴν ἀμεριμνίαν αὐτῶν, μετερχόμενος οὗτος ὁ ἅγιος, ἐν μέσοις τισὶ γίνεται τοῖς ἀγγέλοις· καὶ ἀγγελικῆς ὀπτασίας ἀξιοῦται. μέσοι γὰρ οἱ ἄγγελοι, ὡς μέσοι ὄντες Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, τὰ πρὸς σωτηρίαν αὐτοῖς διακονοῦμενοι. ὅθεν καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις εἶρηκε· Μὴ καταφρονήσητε ἐνὸς τῶν μικρῶν τούτων· οἱ γὰρ ἄγγελοι αὐτῶν διὰ παντὸς ὁρῶσι τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.⁹⁴ μέσοι οὖν διὰ τοῦτο οἱ ἄγγελοι. ἢ ὅτι καὶ οὗτοι κατὰ τινὰς εἰπεῖν τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν θεολόγων, ἐν σώματί πως εἰσὶ καὶ ἀσώματοι.⁹⁵ τὸ μὲν, πρὸς τὴν θείαν ἐκείνην καὶ ἄκτιστον φύσιν· τὸ δέ, ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς. ἢ οὖν διὰ ταῦτα ἐν μέσοις γεγονέναι τοῖς ἀγγέλοις λέγεται, καὶ ἀγγελικῆς ἀξιοθῆναι θεωρίας τινός, ἢ καὶ διὰ τὸ εἰς ἀσωματότητα οἶον καὶ αὐλίαν ἀναδραμεῖν, ἣν ἴσασιν οἱ πεπονθότες. Ὅτι δὲ οὐ καταμαντευόμενοι ταῦτα φαμέν, παρέστησεν οὗτος ὁ ἅγιος ἐν τῷ τέλει τῆς θεωρίας ἐπαγαγών· Ταῦτα, εἴτε σὺν τῷ χοῖ οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τούτου, λέγειν οὐκ ἔχω· τὰ ἀποστολικά ἐκεῖνα ῥήματα παραφράζων, τὰ περὶ τῆς ἀρρήτου ἐκείνης ἀποκαλύψεως.⁹⁶ τὴν προσευχὴν οὖν μετερχόμενος, ἐν μέσοις γέγονα τούτοις· καὶ ἐφωτίζε με διψῶντα. καὶ ἰδοὺ πάλιν ἦν ἐν ἐκείνοις ἐν οἷς καὶ πρώην· τῇ τε ἀμεριμνίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀσύλῳ τῆς καρδίας ἐργασίᾳ. ἀλλὰ τίς ὁ φωτίζων τοῦτον τὸν ἅγιον, εἰ μὲν ἄγγελον εἶναι τοῦτον ἐροῦμεν κατὰ τὴν ἐν ταῖς σχολικαῖς παρασημειώσεσιν εὐρισκομένην ἐξήγησιν, ἀνάγκη πάντως καὶ γινώσκειν τοῦτον τὴν ἄκτιστον φύσιν, καὶ διδάσκειν αὐτὴν ἐτέρους· ὅπερ ἀδύνατον. οὐσία γὰρ οὐσίαν ὡς τῷ⁹⁷ χρυσορρήμονι⁹⁸ καὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ δοκεῖ, οὔτε ἰδεῖν οὔτε γινῶναι δύναται ποτέ, ἐὰν μὴ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ᾗ. διὸ καλῶς εἴρηται· Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε.⁹⁹ ἀντὶ τοῦ Οὐκ ἔγνωκε, τί τὴν φύσιν ἐστίν. εἰ οὖν ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, πῶς ἐρωτήσαντι τῷ ἁγίῳ τί πρὸ τῆς ὁρατῆς φύσεως ὁ δεσπότης Χριστὸς ἦν, διδάσκειν ὁ ἄγγελος οὐκ ἡδύνατο; οὐ παρὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀδυναμίαν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ ἄρχοντος νοῦ ἀσθένειαν. οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς εἴρηται ὅτι οὐκ ἡδύνατο διδάσκειν [f. 273v] ὁ ἄγγελος· ἢ γὰρ ἂν καλῶς εἶχεν· ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐ συνεχωρεῖτο ὁ ἄρχων νοῦς. εἰ γὰρ οὗτος συνεχωρεῖτο, ἐδίδαξεν ἂν πάντως ὁ ἄγγελος. εἰ δὲ ἐδίδαξε, καὶ κατέλαβε πάντως, τὴν ἀκατάληπτον φύσιν. καὶ πῶς ἄρα ἀληθεύσει ὁ λόγος διαρρήδην ἀποφαινόμενος· Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε; ὁ μονογενὴς γὰρ Υἱὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ Πατρὸς, ἐκεῖνος ἡμῖν ἐξηγήσατο.¹⁰⁰ οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν

⁹⁴ Mt. 18:10.⁹⁵ Cf. Jo. Damasc. *Or. de imag.*, 3.25.11-12 Kotter.⁹⁶ Cf. 2 Cor. 12:2.⁹⁷ τῷ] τὸ C⁹⁸ Cf. Jo. Chrys. *De incompr.* Hom. 5.248-249 Malingrey.⁹⁹ Jo. 1:18.¹⁰⁰ Jo. 1:18.

Πατέρα, εἰ μὴ ὁ Υἱός· οὐδὲ τὸν Υἱόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ Πατήρ.¹⁰¹ καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα δὲ τὸ ἅγιον, οὕτως οἶδε τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὡς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οἶδε τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ.¹⁰² μετὰ δὲ τὴν πρώτην καὶ μακαρίαν φύσιν, οὐδεὶς ἔγνω ποτὲ τὸν Θεόν, εἰ μὴ ὡς αὐτὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν· οὐκ ἀνθρώπων μόνον, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων δυνάμεων καὶ αὐτῶν φημί τῶν χειρουβὶμ καὶ σεραφίμ. οὐκ ἀφῆκε μέντοι ἡμᾶς ἐν παντελεῖ ἀγνωσίᾳ· πᾶσι γὰρ ἡ γνῶσις τοῦ εἶναι Θεὸν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ φυσικῶς ἐγκατέσπαρται. οὐκ οὖν ἄγγελος Θεοῦ φύσιν διδάσκειν ἠδύνατο. λείπεται ἄρα αὐτὸν τὸν μονογενῆ Λόγον εἶναι τὸν καὶ φωτίζοντα τοῦτον τὸν ἅγιον, περὶ οὗ εἴρηται, ὅτι Φωτίζεις σὺ ἀπὸ ὁρέων αἰωνίων,¹⁰³ καὶ ἐρωτώμενον τί πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι ἄνθρωπος ἦν; καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον καὶ λέγοντα ὅτι διδάσκειν οὐ δύναται διὰ τὸ μὴ συγχωρεῖσθαι τὸν νοῦν τοῦ ἐρωτῶντος· Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἠφίετο φησὶν ὁ ἀρχων νοῦς. ἀρχων δὲ οὗτος λέγεται, ἄχρις ἂν τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἔχων ἐστίν. ὁ γὰρ τοι τῶν ἀκρατῶν καὶ ἀκολάστων ἐξέρχεται τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ἐξέστραπται, καὶ τὴν ἀρχικὴν ἀρχὴν ἀποβέβληκε, δοῦλος παθῶν γεγονώς. ἔστι καὶ οὕτως εἰπεῖν· οὐ τῶν καθ’ ἓνα τρόπον λεγομένων εὐρίσκεται τὸ δύνασθαι, καὶ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι. τὸ μὲν γὰρ τι λέγεται, κατὰ δυνάμεως ἔλλειψιν, καὶ ποτὲ καὶ πρὸς τι· ὡς τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι τὸ παιδίον ἀθλεῖν, καὶ τὸ σκυλάκιον βλέπειν, ἢ πρὸς τόνδε διαγωνίζεσθαι. ἀθλήσει γὰρ ἴσως ποτέ, καὶ ὄψεται, καὶ διαγωνιέται πρὸς τόνδε, κἂν πρὸς ἕτερον ἀδυνάτως ἔξη. τὸ δέ, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον, ὡς οὐ δύναται πόλις ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη κρυβῆναι,¹⁰⁴ ἐπιπροσθοῦντος τινὸς μείζονος. τὸ δέ, ὡς οὐκ εὐλογον· ὡς τὸ Οὐ δύνανται νηστεύειν υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος ἐφ’ ὅσον ἔνδημος ὁ νυμφίος.¹⁰⁵ τί γὰρ δεῖ νηστεύειν τοὺς Λόγῳ καθαιρομένους; τὸ δέ, ὡς ἀβούλητον· ὡς τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι ἐκεῖ σημεῖα ποιεῖν διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν τῶν δεχομένων.¹⁰⁶ κατὰ τοῦτο δὴ τὸ σημαινόμενον· τὰ γὰρ λοιπὰ τέως, παρήμμι· οὐκ ἠδύνατο διδάσκειν ὁ ἐρωτώμενος Χριστός· τουτέστιν οὐκ ἠβούλετο τὸν ἐρωτῶντα αὐτὸν διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν αὐτοῦ. ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τοῦ συναμφοτέρου χρειά πρὸς τὴν διδασκαλίαν καὶ τῆς τοῦ διδάσκοντος καὶ τῆς τοῦ διδασκομένου δυνάμεως, οὐκ ἠβούλετο διδάσκειν. οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἔλλειψιν τῆς θεϊκῆς αὐτοῦ δυνάμεως, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ διδασκομένου ἀδυναμίαν. ἀποπεσὼν οὖν ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ ποθομένου, καὶ τὸ τί ἦν πρὸ τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μορφῆς ὁ θεάνθρωπος Λόγος μὴ δυνηθεὶς καταλαβεῖν· οὐδὲ γὰρ φθάνει οὐδὲ ὁ θεωρητικώτατος νοῦς καὶ πολυπράγμων ἐπὶ τὴν μακαρίαν ἐκείνην καὶ ἄκτιστον φύσιν ἀναδραμεῖν· ἐπὶ τὰ δευτέρα τρέπεται, ἔργοις παιδευθεὶς, τοῦτο δὴ τὸ σολομώντειον· τὸ Ἰσχυρότερα σου μὴ ζῆτει, καὶ ὑψηλότερά σου μὴ πολυπραγμόνει.¹⁰⁷ διὸ καὶ πῶς νῦν ὑπάρχει μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν καὶ τὴν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνάληψιν, ἐδεῖτο μαθεῖν. τί οὖν ὁ φωτίζων; ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳις μὲν ἀπεκρίνατο, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν τούτοις. τί δὲ ταῦτα βούλεται, ὧδε ἂν μάθοιμεν. ἐτόλμησαν οἱ τὰ Μανιχαίων φρονοῦντες, ἀδικίαν λαλῆσαι κατὰ τοῦ δεσποτικοῦ σώματος, φάμενοι, ὡς ἀναληφθεὶς ὁ δεσπότης Χριστός, ἀπέθετο τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ, καὶ γυμνῇ τῇ θεότητι ἀνῆλθε πρὸς οὐρανοὺς. [f. 274r] οἱ καὶ ῥῆμα τοῦ Δαυὶδ κακῶς παραδινήσαντες, εἰς μαρτυρίαν παρήγον τοῦ δόγματος αὐτῶν, τὸ λέγον· Ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ ἔθετο τὸ σκῆνωμα αὐτοῦ.¹⁰⁸ τοῦτο οὖν ἀπορραπίζων καὶ τὸν

¹⁰¹ Mt. 1:27.

¹⁰² Cf. 1 Cor. 2:11.

¹⁰³ Ps. 75:5.

¹⁰⁴ Mt. 5:14.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Mc. 2:19.

¹⁰⁶ τὸ μὲν γὰρ τι λέγεται – τῶν δεχομένων] Greg. Naz. *De filio*, Or. 30, 10.4–18 Gallay.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Sir. 3:21.

¹⁰⁸ Ps. 18:5.

νοῦν φωτίζων τοῦ διψῶντος φωτίζεσθαι, ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀπεκρίνατο· τουτέστιν ἐν ταῖς δυσὶ φύσεσι· καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάληψιν καὶ τὴν εἰς οὐρανούς ἄνοδον διατελῶ. οὐ γὰρ ἀποτέθειται τὸ πρόσλημμα κατὰ τὴν τῶν Μανιχαίων ἐρεσχελίαν. πλὴν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τούτοις, ἤγουν ἐν ῥεύσει καὶ φθορᾷ· ὅπερ δηλῶν καὶ ὁ μέγας ἀπόστολος φησὶν· Εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστὸν ἐσθίοντα καὶ πίνοντα, καὶ τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς ἐπιτελοῦντα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τούτοις ἐπιγινώσκομεν νῦν.¹⁰⁹ ἄφθαρτον γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἐκεῖνο μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν, καὶ θαρρῶν λέγω φησὶ που ὁ μέγας ἐν θεολογίᾳ Γρηγόριος, ὁμόθεον^{110, 111} εἶτα πάλιν ἐπηρώτων· πῶς ὁ μὲν, τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν φησὶ καθῆσθαι τοῦτον ἐκδεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρός·¹¹² αἷτιος γὰρ ὁ Πατὴρ κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἄνω γεννήσεως λόγον· Στέφανος δὲ ἐκδεξιῶν εἶδεν ἐστῶτα,¹¹³ ὁ δὲ τῶν ἀποριῶν τούτων ἀκροατῆς, καὶ ταύτης τῆς ζητήσεως ἀπολύων, κρείττω ἀκοῆς εἶπεν εἶναι τὴν ἐρώτησιν, καὶ οἰκτεῖον καιρὸν ἔχειν τῆς ἀποκαλύψεως. ἐγὼ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ θείου πόθου ἐλκόμενος, προσάγαγε εἶπον τῷ τοιοῦτῳ καιρῷ τάχιον ἐν θερμῇ τῇ καρδίᾳ δεόμενος, καὶ μὴ¹¹⁴ τῆς καλῆς στερήσεως ἐφέσεως. ἐκεῖνος δὲ τοῦ λυποῦντος με ἀπαλλάττων, οὕτω τὸν καιρὸν ἔλεγε παρεῖναι· οὕτω γὰρ οὐδὲ τὸ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν ἀνάπτειν πῦρ ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀναφλέγεται. ταύτην οὖν τὴν ὀπτασίαν ἀπαγγείλας, οὐ μεγαλαυχεῖ, ἀλλ' ἄνοιαν ἐαυτῷ προσάπτει· οὐκ οἶδα λέγων εἶτε ἐν τῷ χοῦ ταῦτα τεθέαμαι, εἶτε καθ' ἐαυτόν, τῆς ψυχῆς ἀνιπαμένης πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον, καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἐπὶ βραχὺ καταλιπούσης, τοῦ πρὸς αὐτὴν συνδέσμου κεχωρισμένον καὶ τῆς ἀνακράσεως.¹¹⁵

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¹⁰⁹ Cf. 2 Cor. 5:16.

¹¹⁰ ὁμόθεον] ὁμόθρονον C

¹¹¹ Greg. Naz. *In Sanctum Pascha*, Or. 45, 13, PG 36, 641A.

¹¹² Cf. Lc. 22:69.

¹¹³ Cf. Act. 7:56.

¹¹⁴ μὴ] s.l. C

¹¹⁵ καὶ μὴ ... ἀνακράσεως] Phot. *Amphil.* Qu. 273.46-55 Westerink.

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