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# The Christian Appropriation of the Jewish Scriptures: Allegory, Pauline Exegesis, and the Negotiation of Religious Identities

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article is aimed at introducing an ongoing European Research Council project, hosted at VU University, Amsterdam (September 2008 - January 2014). It focuses on the appropriation of the Old Testament by early Christian interpreters of the Bible. A historical approach, not commonly adopted in the study of biblical interpretation, enables us to study the question of how this process contributed to the formation of distinctive Christian identities within the multicultural society of the late Roman Principate and early Byzantine rule. The exegetes of this period were to a great extent responsible for the creation of a distinctive, sophisticated, and uncompromising discourse – a «totalising Christian discourse»,<sup>1</sup> which determines Christian identities up to this day. In two projects, carried out by eventually three researchers, we are engaged in making cross sections of the relevant material.<sup>2</sup>

It was allegorizing interpretation that enabled exegetes belonging to the so-called School of Alexandria to recognize Christ everywhere in the Old Testament, and thus to appropriate it and make it useful to the Church. Thus the *Song of Songs* was no longer considered an earthly love song, but was said to describe Christ's love for the Church. Exegetes associated with the School of Antioch opposed to this kind of approach.

<sup>1</sup> A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, 220-22.

<sup>2</sup> The other team member is Dr Emiliano Fiori who is studying the Syriac material. Either a doctoral student, or an additional postdoctoral research fellow, will be assigned the task of studying Theodore of Mopsuestia's Old Testament commentaries.

The traditional understanding of the distinctions between the two schools needs to be broadened and corrected by a picture of the actual practice of their hermeneutics. In my view the Antiochene opposition was necessitated by the fact that pagan and “heretic” critics did not accept the Alexandrian use of allegory. My innovative hypothesis is related to the central role played by the letters of the apostle Paul in the Antiochene reaction against Alexandria. For the Antiochenes, *the use of Paul became an alternative means to bridge the gap between the two Testaments*. Instead of a book in which every jot and tittle referred to Christ through allegory, the Antiochenes came to view the narrative of the Old Testament as an amalgamation of moral lessons that testified to God’s pedagogic dealings with mankind in the course of history. These moral lessons, they maintained, agreed with Paul’s teaching.

## II. KEY ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APPROPRIATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A central question is how the process of the appropriation of the Old Testament by early Christian exegetes contributed to the formation of distinctive Christian identities within the multicultural society of the late Roman principate and early Byzantine rule. In order to get a fuller picture of the process as a whole, while keeping control over the source material, we felt it necessary for us to make cross sections of the material from the period which is most relevant in this respect: the “golden era” of the Church Fathers (3rd-5th c.). In this context, Christian biblical exegesis is being read not only as a means of mapping current theological doctrine or of assessing the exposure of the Greek Fathers to the classical tradition, but as a means of reconstructing the evolution of Christian identities. The issue of how exegetes constructed identities and oppositions both in their theoretical statements as well as in the actual practice of their exegesis remains a vital path of investigation. In this context, the phenomenon of appropriation and the hermeneutical methods related to it as key elements in the formation of Christian identities are being sketched out.

### *1. Background: Hermeneutics and Identity in Late Antiquity*

A corner stone in the consolidation of distinctive Christian identities under Roman and Byzantine rules was biblical interpretation.

Through their continuous interpreting and re-interpreting of the biblical text, Christians formed their own discourse, which positioned them

vis-à-vis “heretics”, Jews, and pagans, and played a key role in the consolidation of their communal identity. Establishing one’s interpretation and *making others accept it* was synonymous with holding the keys to social power and control. Conflicts among Christians during the formative period of Christianity led to divisions whose repercussions are still relevant today. One of the main issues in the debate remains the adoption and appropriation of the Jewish scriptures. This process of appropriation, it is argued, constituted a supersessionary claim in relation not only to Judaism, but also to Hellenism.

## 2. The Supersessionary Claim of Christianity in Relation to Judaism

We can hardly imagine the enormous impetus and energy which went into the question of whether the Old Testament should be accommodated into the Christian corpus. A central figure in the articulation of this debate was Marcion who, in the second century, founded his own church, while establishing as his canon an edited version of the *Gospel of Luke* and some of the Pauline letters.<sup>3</sup> Paul was, according to Marcion, the only apostle who had rightly understood the new message of salvation as delivered by Christ, who had nothing to do with the God of the Old Testament. This was the most radical answer to everything that was offensive in the Old Testament in the eyes of educated pagans: its language, the anthropomorphic image of God, his wrath and cruelty, the fact that he seems to change opinions now and then, and the supposed barbaric nature of the story of creation. Marcion’s movement became extremely popular, and remained influential at least until the sixth century.<sup>4</sup>

In reply to Marcion, other Christians established their own canon, defending the Jewish scriptures. They felt that the Gospel of Christ had to be presented as the fulfillment of the promises inherent in Judaism. The Jewish corpus was virtually the only external source which could lend authority to the Gospel. Without it, Christianity would be something completely new – not a recommendation in those days. Thus Origen (d. c.254), one of the greatest thinkers of the Church, developed

<sup>3</sup> The classic study on Marcion, including a full analysis of the sources, is Adolf von Harnack’s *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der Katholischen Kirche* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, 45), Leipzig, J.C. Hinrich’sche Buchhandlung, 1921. For a recent appraisal, see now Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 250), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2010, who also discusses studies published in the intervening period.

<sup>4</sup> See Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, Leipzig, J.C. Hinrich’sche Buchhandlung, 1924<sup>4</sup>, 931-32.

the concept of the unity of the Scriptures: all of Scripture were divinely inspired and the old revelation and the new were equally the revelation of an economy in which humankind was able to receive the true knowledge of God.<sup>5</sup> Each verse could be understood in the light of the Bible's overarching meaning, which was Christological. The offensive elements in the Bible were stumbling-blocks<sup>6</sup> that adverted the skilful interpreter to a higher truth, which could be reached through allegorical interpretation. Allegorizing was Origen's main tool to connect every jot and tittle of the Old Testament to the message of the Gospel, and thus the key to the appropriation of the Old Testament.

### 3. Supersession of Pagan Culture

The method of allegorical interpretation brought Origen into conflict with pagans, for the appropriation of the Jewish scriptures also constituted a supersessionary claim in relation to pagan, Hellenic culture. The scriptures replaced in a sense the Greek classics and became an alternative body of literature, which was subjected to the same methods of interpretation. They became a basis for intertextual references and a source of authority for Christian orators. Thus Christians adopted pagan methods of interpretation, but substituted the classics that were the object of the hermeneutical exercise.<sup>7</sup> We cannot, therefore, construe a simple opposition between Hellenic approaches and Judaeo-Christian ones. The Bible became the literary foundation of a new Christian rhetoric, which was equally informed by the scriptural corpus, as much as by traditional classical rhetoric.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1994, esp. 47-48; Marguerite Harl's introduction to *Origène. Philocalie, 1-20. Sur les Ecritures et la Lettre à Africanus sur l'histoire de Suzanne* (Sources Chrétiennes, 302), Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1983, esp. 51-57 and 59-74; and Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, 1994, 21-27.

<sup>6</sup> See for Origen's use of the term *De principiis* 4.2.9, ed. H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti, *Origène. Traité des Principes 3* (Sources Chrétiennes, 268), Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980, 334-40; discussion and further references in Bas ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress: The Use of Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac Biblical Texts in Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 6), Leuven, Peeters, 1997, 117.

<sup>7</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis...*, 47.

<sup>8</sup> Hagit Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition: John Chrysostom on Noah and the Flood* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 12), Leuven, Peeters, 2003, 11.

#### 4. Pagan Opposition and Christian Defence

Origen's pagan adversary Celsus claimed, among other things, that the Bible was not a text one should allegorize.<sup>9</sup> The idea of allegorical interpretation as such was not at stake: within the philosophical schools this was an accepted technique to deal with the Greek myths. Celsus' point was that not all texts could be explained using this technique. Celsus' attack struck at the heart of Origen's theory of the unity of the Bible, as it depended on allegorical interpretation. In the fourth century, the influential Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry came back to the issue in his massive work *Against the Christians*.<sup>10</sup> Porphyry has been described as «perhaps the most formidable intellectual opponent of the Early Church».<sup>11</sup> Some of the greatest Christian authors felt compelled to reply to him.

In his reply to Porphyry, Didymus, a prominent member of the so-called Alexandrian school, kept true to Origen's principles.<sup>12</sup> However, the Palestinian exegete and church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, whilst defending allegory in principle, followed a more accommodating approach. His *Gospel Questions* are an indication of this, as well as the fact that two of his pupils, Acacius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Emesa, both eschewed allegorizing interpretations in their exegetical works.<sup>13</sup> They are among the first members of the so-called Antiochene school. The Antiochenes must have known Porphyry's work. Furthermore, they attempted to consolidate apparent or inherent discrepancies between the Testaments by finding a philological solution or by deducing a moral lesson.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, 23), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004, 59-64; cf. Philip Sellew, "Achilles or Christ? Porphyry and Didymus in Debate over Allegorical Interpretation", *Harvard Theological Review*, 82 (1989) 79-100, esp. 92-94.

<sup>10</sup> T.D. Barnes, "Scholarship or Propaganda? Porphyry's *Against the Christians* and its Setting", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 39 (1994) 53-65; Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament...*, 150-247; and Sellew, "Achilles or Christ?..."

<sup>11</sup> Sellew, "Achilles or Christ?...", 79; cf. Aryeh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism*, Leiden, Brill, 2002), 17, and Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation...*, 54 and 62.

<sup>12</sup> Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Question-and-Answer Collections in Syriac Literature", in: Annelie Volgers and Claudio Zamagni (eds.), *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 37), Leuven, Peeters, 2004, 145-63, esp. 152.

<sup>13</sup> Romeny, "Question-and-Answer Collections...", 148-54.

<sup>14</sup> Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition...*, 223-26.

## 5. Main Hypothesis

It has already been recognized that Paul was extremely popular with John Chrysostom, a major Antiochene figure. A recent book by Mitchell deals with Chrysostom's special love for Paul.<sup>15</sup> When elaborating on Mitchell's argument, we come closer to the conclusion that the predilection for Paul was typical not only of Chrysostom, but also of his school. Furthermore, Mitchell hardly tries to explain the reasons behind Paul's popularity with the Antiochenes. Our main hypothesis is that *the use of Paul constituted a new means to bridge the gap between the Old and New Testaments: Paul was used as an alternative hermeneutical key to the old revelation.*<sup>16</sup>

The Antiochenes understood that in order to deal with pagan and "heretic" criticisms of the Old Testament, they had to accept that the allegorizing methods of the philosophers could be applied only to myths and mysteries. Instead, their exegetical method had to rest on the techniques of the pagan grammarians and rhetoricians, which could be applied to factual, historical texts. It was through the use of Paul that the exegetes of Antioch found ways of approaching the Old Testament as a historical text which was indeed plain rather than full of mystery, and which bore for Christians a clear moral message. Instead of interpreting every jot and tittle in of Old Testament as a reference to Christ, as did the Alexandrian allegorists, Antiochenes rescued the unity of the Bible in a different way. They pointed to the moral message of the Old Testament which, in their view, was underlined in God's pedagogic approach in his dealings with mankind throughout the ages. These moral lessons, the Antiochenes maintained, agreed in all respects with Paul's teaching. In corroboration of this, they quoted Paul abundantly in their Old Testament commentaries, and they produced a relatively high number of commentaries on the Pauline corpus itself.

## 6. The Context of Earlier Research on the Two Exegetical Schools

Many handbooks still suggest that the term "Antiochene" refers mainly to two authors, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, sometimes joined by John Chrysostom and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.<sup>17</sup> Over the

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie, 40), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition...*, 5 and 42.

<sup>17</sup> Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation...*, 59-60, 67-77; Henning Graf Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung 2*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1994, 9-27; Sten Hidal, "Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Antiochene School with its Prevalent Literal and Historical Method", in: M.



past 25 years, however, a number of important studies dealing with individual exegetes has appeared,<sup>18</sup> often based on new text editions and even texts hitherto unknown, such as the ancient Armenian translation of Eusebius of Emesa, published by Hovhannessian.<sup>19</sup> These studies confirm the consistency of the Antiochene approach, even though it is more a *Richtung* than a school in the sense of the Alexandrian School of the Catechetes.<sup>20</sup> The only Antiochene who distanced himself to some extent from Diodore and Theodore would be Theodoret of Cyrrhus.<sup>21</sup> In addition to a new synthesis of these studies, the scale of this project enables us to produce for the first time a detailed study on the issue of identity formation among early Christians on the basis of exegetical texts.

The opposition between the Antiochene School and that of Alexandria has been one of the givens in earlier scholarship. The Alexandrians were considered allegorists and the Antiochenes defenders of literal and typological interpretation. More recent studies, however, have stressed that this traditional distinction between the exegetical schools is too simple. Some scholars, in particular in post-modernist circles, have even implied that there was no distinction at all.<sup>22</sup> My position remains that our description of the distinction needs to be broadened through further mapping of the actual practice of Antiochene and Alexandrian hermeneutics. I fully agree with Frances Young, one of the most influ-



Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation*, I, *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (until 1300)*, 1, *Antiquity*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 543-68; Andrew Louth, "John Chrysostom and the Antiochene School to Theodoret of Cyrrhus", in: Frances Young – Lewis Ayres – Andrew Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 342-52; and Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, II, Leiden, Brill, 2004, chapter IX (the latter discusses more authors but the information is confused and outdated, except for the part on Theodore of Mopsuestia, which was written by Manlio Simonetti).

<sup>18</sup> Exegetes served by recent monographs and articles include Eusebius of Emesa (see next note), Severian of Gabala, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and Gennadius of Constantinople.

<sup>19</sup> Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentarii in Octateuchum et Reges* (CPG 3532, 3542 with new data in the *Supplementum* to CPG), in: Vahan Hovhannessian (ed.), *Eusèbe d'Émèse*, I, *Commentaire de l'Octateuque*, Venise, 1980. Cf. Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress...*, with further references, and see now Françoise Petit, Lucas Van Rompay, and Jos J.S. Weitenberg, *Eusèbe d'Émèse: Commentaire de la Genèse. Texte arménien de l'édition de Venise (1980), fragments grecs et syriaques, avec traductions* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 15), Leuven, Peeters, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Thus already, among others, Ludwig Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche* (Jena, Mauke, 1869), 126; see Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis and the Origins of the Antiochene School", in: Judith Frishman – Lucas Van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation. A Collection of Essays* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 5), Leuven, Peeters, 1997, 125-42, esp. 129, and Idem, *A Syrian in Greek Dress...*, 90.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Noël Guinot, *L'exégèse de Théodoret de Cyr* (Théologie historique, 100), Paris, Beauchesne, 1995, 818-19; cf. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation...*, 75-76.

<sup>22</sup> Discussion in Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition...*, 37-38, with n. 21.



ential authors on the subject, that categories such as literal, historical, typological, and allegorical are not sufficient to describe the opposition between the schools,<sup>23</sup> if only because our modern definition of these terms is not that of the ancient exegetes. For example, when one describes the Antiochene method as “literal”, one would not expect the strong tendency to take moral lessons from the texts.

It is one thing, however, to say that modern descriptions of the schools are deficient, and another to say that «ancient exegetes did not distinguish between typology and allegory» and that the former concept is «a modern construct».<sup>24</sup> The problem is that in her 1997 book, Young seems not to have chosen between these options. In passages such as those I have just quoted it reflects the stance of her 1994 article on typology, which states that this term is a construct of twentieth-century scholars who wanted to see the roots of their own historico-critical method in the Antiochene School.<sup>25</sup> However, a number of recently rediscovered texts show that it is not (or not only) a twentieth century construct, but one of the fourth century. I am referring especially to methodical treatises and introductions in the *Psalms* commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia<sup>26</sup> and Diodore.<sup>27</sup> In contrast to some other authors, Young has realized the relevance of these texts, and she actually discusses one of them in her 1997 book,<sup>28</sup> but in my opinion she has not yet been able to reach a full new synthesis here. In any case, a flat denial of the opposition between the schools is not borne out by the sources, especially since the publication of the newly discovered texts, and would also overstate Young’s earlier (1994) position.

<sup>23</sup> Frances M. Young, “Exegetical Method and Scriptural Proof: The Bible in Doctrinal Debate”, in: E.A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica 19* - Papers Presented to the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1987, Leuven, Peeters, 1989, 291-304, esp. 291-92, 297, 299, 302.

<sup>24</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis...*, 152.

<sup>25</sup> Frances M. Young, “Typology”, in: Stanley E. Porter – Paul Joyce – David E. Orton (eds.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (Biblical Interpretation Series, 8), Leiden, Brill, 1994, 29-48.

<sup>26</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Treatise against the Allegorists, preserved among the Syriac fragments of the Expositio in Psalmos* (CPG 3833), éd. Lucas Van Rompay, in: Théodore de Mopsueste, *Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138-148)*, (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 435-436; Syr. 189-190), Leuven, Peeters, 1982.

<sup>27</sup> *The Commentarii in Psalmos attributed to Diodore* (CPG 3818). Preface to the commentary as a whole and Prologue to Ps. 118, in Louis Mariès, “Extraits du commentaire de Diodore de Tarse sur les Psaumes: Préface du commentaire – Prologue du Psaume CXVIII”, *Recherches de science religieuse*, 10 (1919) 79-101. New edition of the Preface and first part of the *Commentary* by Jean-Marie Olivier, *Diodori Tarsensis Commentarii in Psalmos 1* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, 6), Turnhout - Leuven, Brepols, 1982.

<sup>28</sup> The texts attributed to Diodore mentioned in the preceding footnote; see Young, *Biblical Exegesis...*, 173-80.

The way out is simple: the opposition between the schools is a construct of the fourth century, but it was taken seriously and was seen as essential at the time. Therefore Antiochenes did write commentaries which are different from the Alexandrian ones. The description of the differences should be done with care, and should also take the many points of agreement into account. We have to reach beyond the surface of the Antiochene and Alexandrian self-descriptions. I have done precisely this in my *Rhetoric and Tradition*, a study on the Antiochene John Chrysostom. The next challenge would be to explain the way the opposition was constructed. In other words: what is the *motivation* behind the establishment of the schools in question as a key element in the consolidation of Christian identities?

### 7. A Historical Approach in the Study of Ancient Christian Exegesis

Being interested in the role played by exegesis in the formation of a new Christian culture and identity within Late Antique society, my approach is primarily that of a historian using a combination of techniques taken from the sociology of knowledge and from literary criticism, rather than that of a historian of doctrine or a biblical exegete. A glimpse at the scholarly trends used in the study of ancient texts over the past three decades exemplifies the huge advancement in method and approach brought about through the exposure of historians to literary and sociological disciplines. Prominent ancient historians have pinpointed Christian discourse and rhetoric as key elements in the expansion of Christianity which, in addition to strong imperial patronage, derived its strength largely from its textuality and wealth of modes of expression.<sup>29</sup>

### 8. A Contribution from the Social Sciences

An important aspect in the study of the process of cultural appropriation is its literary expressions, that is, the conscious, meticulous, and calculating borrowing, or even “stealing”, of cultural features from one group and their reception by another. Following Geertz’s seminal observation that culture is continuously created by peoples’ interpretative prowess,<sup>30</sup> I wish to establish further the calculating and “rationalistic” nature of the actors of cultural appropriation (i.e. those who take an

<sup>29</sup> Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*..., 43.

<sup>30</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York, Basic Books, 1983; Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologist’s Account*, Cambridge/MA, Harvard University Press, 1999, 98.

active part in the process). This is paramount to our understanding of the highly literate facets of the phenomenon.

In sociology, the term “cultural appropriation” is a close cousin of “cultural diffusion”, “borrowing”, and “acculturation”. The term in question presupposes a dominant culture, or a symbolic system, taking possession of cultural elements which are distinctive, in the majority of cases, to a minority group. Many contemporary cultural anthropologists, however, shun the seemingly “aggressive” connotations of the term under discussion and prefer using the more effeminate and balanced terms “cultural diffusion”, “borrowing”, and “acculturation” which, to a different degree, stress reciprocity in the exchange of cultural elements among different ethnical groups and social classes.<sup>31</sup>

Identity and its negotiation through cultural appropriation are issues applicable not only to popular, but also to elite, text-based cultures, not only to modern but also to ancient societies. In my study, I aim at addressing the dichotomy presented in the modern discipline of “cultural studies” between elite and popular cultures.<sup>32</sup> In this context, the mapping of the identity formation of early Christian intellectuals, as these strove to distinguish from, but also to align themselves with, their Jewish counterparts constitutes an important contribution. To achieve just that, an overview of the many different givens which, together, made it possible for Theodore, Chrysostom, and others to negotiate Christian identity through cultural assets is essential.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, it is important to understand hermeneutical techniques not only as expressions of different literary styles, but also of genuine differences in ideology and approach, deeply rooted in the cultural and mental undercurrents that combine together to create one’s distinctive image of the “self”.

When ancient Christians presented themselves as *verus Israel*, or the True Israel, this suggested that the promises given to Israel had always been intended for Christians. It is easy to describe this point of view in primordialist terms. What happens in reality is that people tend to reify and essentialize their cultural setting,<sup>34</sup> in the continuous and largely unconscious process of boundary marking and boundary maintenance which consolidates a communal identity. As interpreters of cultures, sociologists have gone a long way from the primordialist approach which sought to unearth structural-functional paradigms, to the

<sup>31</sup> Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao (eds.), *Borrowed Power. Essays on Cultural Appropriation*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1997, 5-7.

<sup>32</sup> Kuper, *Culture...*, 229-32.

<sup>33</sup> J.M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities*, New York - London, Routledge, 1999, 81-96.

constructivist approach which focuses on the understanding of social mechanisms rather than on descriptions of manifest forms. According to the latter approach we need to reach beyond the end result of a group's self-representation, and to find out how they construct and negotiate this identity. In this context, appropriation can be seen as a special case of boundary marking ("boundary" is a term used in sociology to denote a sense of distinction which encapsulates the identity of the community<sup>35</sup> and interaction with other communal entities is essential to the maintenance of its boundaries, for its consciousness is encapsulated in the perception of its boundaries).

### 9. *The Role of Theology*

Students of Christian theology may be alarmed at the apparent "suppression" in this article of the doctrinal issues in the debate between Antioch and Alexandria. Doctrine or, to be more precise, Christology, was an important element in ancient Christian discourse and played an undeniable role in the identity formation of Christian communities, with the Antiochenes, or Dyophysites, standing for a two-nature Christology and the Alexandrians, or Miaphysites, standing for a one-nature Christology. However, the Christology of the schools has been served extremely well with studies by Hanson,<sup>36</sup> Grillmeier,<sup>37</sup> and others. It is now time to build further on these studies, but also to reach beyond doctrinal perspectives and to look at these texts as historical sources whose study from a sociological perspective can contribute to a better understanding of phenomena such as the formation of communal identities. The methodological treatise and introductions in the *Psalms* commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore which I mentioned above also show that method plays an even greater role than hitherto imagined in the way Antiochenes constructed their opposition. In my opinion these texts force us to reject Rowan Greer's attempt to explain the difference in exclusively theological terms.<sup>38</sup> It is of course quite possible that method was considered important for different reasons. However, one should note that the first of these reasons may very well

<sup>35</sup> F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Boston, Little, Brown & Company, 1969.

<sup>36</sup> R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, Edinburgh. T. & T. Clark, 1988.

<sup>37</sup> Alois Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche 1. Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)*, 3rd ed. with additional material, Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 2004, and following volumes.

<sup>38</sup> Rowan A. Greer, *The Captain of our Salvation: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese, 15), Tübingen, Mohr, 1973.

have been apologetic rather than doctrinal: what was at stake was the unity of the Bible. Tracing possible connections between method and doctrine remain obligatory.

#### 10. An In-Depth Study of the Interpretation of Ephesians (3rd-5th centuries)

In order to put my hypothesis to the test, I have decided to use *Ephesians* as a test case, while focusing on specific questions and issues, such as the use of *Ephesians* as a key to understanding Old Testament passages; the general attitude towards the Old Testament and Judaism; indications of a reaction against pagans such as Celsus or Porphyry, and to “heretics”; for the Antiochenes and Jerome: their reaction to Origen; differences between the authors in moral issues; the contribution of these factors to the formation of communal identities.

With these questions in mind, I am focusing on the study of Origen’s *Commentary on Ephesians*, followed by a study of the reaction to Origen in the Antiochene works of Severian of Gabala,<sup>39</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia,<sup>40</sup> and John Chrysostom,<sup>41</sup> as well as the use of Origen by Jerome.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the commentaries on *Ephesians*, the use of this letter by the same exegetes and a select number of others are being studied in Old Testament commentaries. In this way a full picture of the use of *Ephesians* can be sketched. To be sure, Origen was not the only Alexandrian and he was in fact criticized by fellow Alexandrians. However, as I have demonstrated,<sup>43</sup> this criticism does not diminish his importance, both in his reaction against Marcion and as a stumbling-block for pagan and Antiochene critics. There are good reasons to focus our research on him.

Among the Antiochenes, Theodore will take pride of place. In his works, the Antiochene method appears in its fullest, most ingenious, and most rigid form. It seems, therefore, highly important to make a study of his use of *Ephesians*, and to include also his Old Testament commentaries in our research. Even though tradition has not been merciful to

<sup>39</sup> Severian of Gabala, *Fragmenta in epistulas s. Pauli* (CPG 4219), in: K. Staab (ed.), *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt* (Neutestamentl. Abhandlungen 15; Münster i.W., Aschendorff, 1933), 213-351, with a number of exceptions and additions, cf. CPG and H.D. Altendorf, *Untersuchungen zu Severian von Gabala* (doctoral dissertation, Tübingen, 1957), 14-30, 96-98, 187-219.

<sup>40</sup> See the discussion below.

<sup>41</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epistulam ad Ephesios argumentum et homiliae* (CPG 4431), in: Frederick Field (ed.), *Ioannis Chrysostomi interpretatio omnium epistularum Paulinarum*, 7 vols., Oxford, Bibliotheca Patrum, 1845-62, IV, 104ff.

<sup>42</sup> See the discussion below.

<sup>43</sup> Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition*..., 39.

him, we are still in a rather good position, as we have fragments of his exegesis of a narrative book, *Genesis*,<sup>44</sup> large parts of his work on a poetic book, *Psalms*,<sup>45</sup> as well as his commentary on the Twelve Prophets.<sup>46</sup> With regard to earlier Antiochenes, we are not in the same position. His contemporary John Chrysostom is also very relevant, yet the form of most of his works is that of the homily. By contrast, Theodore's commentaries are perhaps more compact and direct.

### 11. Why Focusing on Ephesians?

Concentrating on Paul's *Letter to the Ephesians* may seem odd to modern readers; after all, the majority of New Testament scholars now consider this letter deutero-Pauline: it has not been written by Paul himself, but by his immediate followers. However, there are no indications that the Pauline authorship was in doubt in the Early Church. The theology of the letter, whilst built on Pauline foundations, has developed further. Some of these developments appeared quite useful to the Fathers. Thus its preoccupation with the cosmic scope and character of salvation, issues of Christology, ecclesiology, and the idea of a universal combat with evil, were all important to Origen and his followers. We can actually say that to Origen *Ephesians* constituted the pinnacle of the Pauline Epistles.<sup>47</sup> Origen's statements on the unity of the Bible and economy actually find their main proof texts in *Ephesians*.

The available source material, we should note, is already rather accessible: for the *Letter to the Ephesians*, we have a good picture of Origen's exegesis as well as that of Theodore of Mopsuestia and John

<sup>44</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Fragmenta in Genesim* (CPG 3827). Edition of Greek fragments in: Françoise Petit, *La Chaîne sur la Genèse*, 4 vols. (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 1-4), Leuven, Peeters, 1991-1996; Syriac: Eduard Sachau, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Fragmenta Syriaca*, Leipzig, Engelmann, 1869; R.M. Tonneau, "Théodore de Mopsueste. Interprétation (du livre) de la Genèse", *Le Muséon*, 66 (1953) 45-64; Taeke Jansma, "Théodore de Mopsueste. Interprétation du livre de la Genèse", *Le Muséon*, 75 (1962) 63-92. Cf. Robert Devreesse, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste* (Studi e Testi, 141), Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948.

<sup>45</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Expositio in Psalmos* (CPG 3833). Edition of the Greek material Robert Devreesse in: *Le Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes (I-LXXX)* (Studi e Testi, 93), Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1939; Syriac: Van Rompay, *Théodore de Mopsueste. Fragments syriaques*; Latin: Lucas De Coninck and M.J. D'Hont, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Expositionis in Psalmos Iuliano Aeclanensi interprete in latinum versae quae supersunt* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina, 88A), Turnhout, Brepols, 1977.

<sup>46</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentarius in XII Prophetas Minores* (CPG 3834), edition by Hans Norbert Sprenger, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in XII Prophetas* (Göttinger Orientforschungen, 5.1), Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1977.

<sup>47</sup> Francesca Cocchini, *Il Paolo di Origene: Contributo alla storia della recezione delle Epistole paoline nel III secolo* (Verba Seniorum ns, 11), Rome, Studium, 1992, 88-90.

Chrysostom. In addition to the Syriac quotations and Greek fragments, there is a full Latin translation of Theodore's *Commentary on the Minor Epistles of St. Paul*.<sup>48</sup> Much of Origen's work has been lost, but for his commentary on *Ephesians*, we have extensive Greek excerpts in *catena* manuscripts,<sup>49</sup> which are supplemented by translations of large parts of the work in Jerome's commentary on the same letter.<sup>50</sup> Only in the case of *Romans* we are in a comparable situation, but for that letter, we do not have a Latin translation of Theodore's commentary.

## 12. Reconstruction of Sources

To some extent any study of cultural appropriation also involves some reconstruction work. In our case, Origen's commentary exists in fragments. As indicated, however, we are aided by Jerome's *Commentary on Ephesians* which, by way of exception, seems to corroborate the popular notion regarding Jerome's full dependence on Origen.<sup>51</sup> An English translation comprising of the text of the fragments and that of Jerome in parallel columns has already been published,<sup>52</sup> but further study is necessary. On the basis of a comparative study of Origen's Greek fragments and Jerome's commentary, it seems likely that the latter has developed a distinctive "Palestinian" approach. The Greek frag-

<sup>48</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentarii in epistulas Pauli minores* (CPG 3845), in: H.B. Swete (ed.), *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni In Epistolas b. Pauli commentarii* 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1880, 112-96. For emendations, see Ulrich Wickert, *Studien zu den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia als Beitrag zur Verständnis der antiochenischen Theologie* (Beihefte zu Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft. 27), Berlin, Töpelmann, 1962), 207; cf. further Eligius Dekkers, "Un nouveau manuscrit du commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste aux épîtres de S. Paul", *Sacris Erudiri*, 6 (1954) 429-33.

<sup>49</sup> Origen, *Commentarii in Ephesios* (fragments; CPG 1460), in: J.A.F. Gregg (ed.), "The Commentary of Origen upon the Epistle to the Ephesians", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1902) 233-44, 398-420, 554-76. Additional fragment in P. Lardet (ed.), *S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera*. 3. *Opera polemica*. 1. *Contra Rufinum* (CCSL, 79), Turnhout, Brepols, 1982, 27, lines 16-32.

<sup>50</sup> Jerome, *Commentarii in iv epistulas Paulinas* (CPL 591, ad *Ephesios*), in: F. Pieri (ed.), *L'esegesi di Girolamo nel Commentario a Efesini. Testo critico e annotazioni*, doctoral dissertation, Bologna, 1996/97.

<sup>51</sup> Discussion in Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 5-7; cf. F. Deniau, "Le commentaire de Jérôme sur Ephésiens nous permet-il de connaître celui d'Origène?", in: Henri Crouzel – Gennaro Lomiento – Joseph Rius-Camps (eds.), *Origeniana: Premier colloque international des études origéniennes* (Quaderni di "Vetera Christianorum", 12), Bari, Istituto di Letteratura Cristiana Antica, 1975, 163-79.

<sup>52</sup> Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome...*, 73-272.

ments themselves appear to derive from an early *catena* manuscript. In contrast to later collections, these were usually rather reliable.<sup>53</sup>

A very important aspect to the study of Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on Ephesians is the material available in the Syriac tradition. The Latin translation of Theodore's commentary seems «sometimes difficult to render and [...] unlikely to be an accurate equivalent of the Greek», as Mark Edwards says.<sup>54</sup> However, in contrast to him we think it is absolutely not necessary to give up reading this important exegete. In addition to Greek *catena* fragments,<sup>55</sup> we have quotations and excerpts in a number of Syriac sources. Some eighty years ago,<sup>56</sup> Vosté already showed how the *Gannat Bussame* (probably from the tenth century),<sup>57</sup> as well as the commentary of Isho'dad of Merv (ninth century),<sup>58</sup> could be used to correct the Latin translation. We can now add a possibly even more important source: the so-called second source (Q2) in the *Anonymous Commentary on the New Testament* preserved in the manuscript (*olim*) Diyarbakir 22, which is based mainly on Theodore in the minor Pauline Epistles.<sup>59</sup> In addition, a Christological work, attributed to Simon the Persecuted, yields one quotation.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Ib.*, 35-42; for the *catena* as genre, see Françoise Petit, "La Chaîne grecque sur la Genèse, miroir de l'exégèse ancienne", in: G. Schöllgen – C. Scholten (eds.), *Stimuli. Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann* (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband, 23), Münster, Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1996, 243-53.

<sup>54</sup> Mark J. Edwards, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament, 8), Downers Grove/IL, Intervarsity Press, 1999, xix-xx.

<sup>55</sup> Most of these are already found in Swete, *Theodori Mopsuesteni In Epistolas b. Pauli...*

<sup>56</sup> J.-M. Vosté, "Le Gannat Bussame", *Revue Biblique*, 37 (1928) 221-32, 386-419, esp. 399-414.

<sup>57</sup> See on this text now Gerrit J. Reinink, *Studien zur Quellen- und Traditionsgeschichte des Evangelienkommentars der Gannat Bussame* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 414; Subsidia, 57), Leuven, Peeters, 1979, and his edition of part of the material: *Gannat Bussame 1. Die Adventssontage* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 501-502; Syr. 211-212), Leuven, Peeters, 1988.

<sup>58</sup> Isho'dad of Merv, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle*, edition by M. Dunlop Gibson, *The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c.850 A.D.) 5.1-2. The Epistles of Paul the Apostle* (Horae Semiticae, 11) Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1916.

<sup>59</sup> Gerrit J. Reinink, "Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia in einem Anonymen nestorianischen Kommentar zum Neuen Testament", in: Livingstone, *Studia Patristica 19...*, 381-91, esp. 383.

<sup>60</sup> Gerrit J. Reinink, "The Quotations from the Lost Works of Theodoret of Cyrus and Theodore of Mopsuestia in an Unpublished East Syrian Work on Christology", in: E.A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica 33 - Papers Presented to the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1995*, Leuven, Peeters, 1997, 562-67.

### III. CONCLUSION

The study of biblical interpretation has long been dominated by approaches which were informed by contemporary doctrinal and exegetical standards. For example, Eva Aleith's 1937 study on the reception of Paul<sup>61</sup> echoes Harnack's position that until Augustine no one understood Paul, except for Marcion, who misunderstood him. Echoes of this idea can be found even in more recent studies. When the doctrinal aspect is less articulated, often the question is posed whether a certain patristic interpretation is "correct", that is, whether it conforms to the writer's own idea of what Paul meant to say.<sup>62</sup> My approach is that of a historian using a combination of techniques taken from the sociology of knowledge and from literary criticism, rather than that of a biblical exegete or a historian of doctrine. My interest is the role played by exegesis in the formation of a new Christian culture and identity within Late Antique society.

Furthermore, the popularity of Paul among Antiochene exegetes, as well as their stress on moral issues, has been noted, yet these points have never been systematically studied, let alone connected to each other. The reasons behind them have also not been investigated, even though the use of Paul is a crucial element in their hermeneutics. Realizing this will result in a more balanced description of the distinction between the Alexandrian and Antiochene Schools. Up to now, studies on the reception of Paul were carried out on the basis of Greek and Latin sources. A good picture of Theodore of Mopsuestia cannot be obtained unless one also uses the Syriac evidence. Among scholars of Syriac exegesis, the exegesis of Paul has been relatively neglected so far. In this project, we have made considerable provisions for the study of Syriac sources by a specialized postdoctoral fellow. Finally, students of the history of exegesis tend to concentrate either on the Old or the New Testament. By contrast, we are now concentrating on the connections exegetes made between the two revelations. Furthermore, the role of exegesis in identity formation has received some attention in modern publications, but identity formation usually takes place in relation to others. The fact that Christian exegetes had to react against pagan and "heretic" interpretations of the Jewish scriptures remains under-exposed. Recognition of this will greatly improve our understanding of the Antiochene reaction against Alexandria.

<sup>61</sup> Eva Aleith, *Paulusverständnis in der alten Kirche* (Beihefte zu Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 18), Berlin, 1937.

<sup>62</sup> Thus for instance Robert C. Hill, *Theodore of Cyrus. Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul*, 2 vols., Brookline/MA, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001, 25.

Late Antiquity is marked by some important developments which took place within society at large and within Christianity, which was then shaping itself as the official religion of the empire and as the fastest growing religion in both parts of the empire. These developments were to determine the course of history in that they played a role in shaping the identities of the Christian Churches up to this day. Among these developments, the debate on the appropriation of the Jewish scriptures, which entailed supersessionary claims in relation to Judaism and paganism, was of central importance.

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