

THE LITERARY ACTIVITY AND BIBLICAL EXEGESIS OF MAR THEODORUS THE "INTERPRETER"

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Along with Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia is one of the most outstanding theologians of the ancient Church. His influence on the great theologians of both East and West is quite evident. Immediately following his death, his works were translated into Syriac, indicating clearly the widespread esteem in which he was held. His biography shows us that his entire life was marked by untiring literary activity, especially in the field of the Holy Scriptures. One of his disciples, John of Antioch, notes that the Interpreter composed ten thousand volumes¹. The titles of his works have come down to us thanks to two catalogues: the *Chronicle of Seert*² and the catalogue of Abd'isho. The latter gathered together at the end of the thirteenth century the exegetical works of Theodore. After his death they were translated into Syriac because of his allegedly Nestorian leanings³.

The Bishop of Mopsuestia has handed down to us texts which are enriching from several points of view. They illustrate his profound theological, biblical and spiritual knowledge. It is striking that his works circulated in practically all the centers and theological schools of both East and West. The author's vast literary production attests to the zeal with which he defended and proclaimed the divine word. In the East he is called *Mpashqana* (ܡܫܩܢܐ), that is, *the Interpreter* par excellence. If we go back to the period in which he lived (5th century), then we can readily identify the reason for the disappearance of almost all his works.

Before moving on to the subdivision of Theodore's works, we shall present a list of them using the two above-mentioned catalogues, that of Abd'isho translated by Assemani from Syriac into Latin, and the *Chronicle of Seert* translated by P. Dib from Arabic to French. It should be stressed that these works reflect a typically Antiochene form of theology and exegesis.

1 Cf. The letter addressed to Proclitus quoted by Facundus of Hermiane, *Pro defensione*, II, 2 in PL 67, 562: "et post decem millia libros adversus haereses conscriptos".

2 The Bishop Addai Scher (+1919)

3 The exegetical works of the Interpreter were translated from Greek into Aramaic by Ibas, Koumi and Probus; cf. J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, III 1 (Hildesheim-New York 1975), p. 85; L. Pirot, *L'oeuvre exégétique de Théodore de Mopsueste* (Rome 1913), p. 71; R. Duval, *La littérature syriaque 2* (Paris 1900), pp. 87; 254 and 316.

"Theodosius⁷ felt honored to receive Theodore's explanations to all the obscure and motivated questions he had sent him. He (Theodosius), together with certain bishops, asked him to write commentaries on the sacred books. Alifa asked him to comment on the Pentateuch, which he did in three volumes. Babai asked for a commentary on Samuel, and Cerdon for another on David, which he produced in three volumes.

Afterwards, he explained the twelve (prophets) at the request of Mar Touba, Ecclesiastes at the request of Marforia, the Acts of the Apostles at the request of Eusebius⁸, the letters of Paul to the Romans at the request of Athanasius, the letter to the Corinthians at the request of Theodore, the second letter to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians and to the Colossians at the request of Tartalis⁹, the two letters to the Thessalonians at the request of Jacob; the two letters to Philemon and to the Hebrews at the request of Heutatus¹⁰. At the request of the latter, he composed a treatise on perfection and the priesthood. Maurice¹¹ (Mauriqi) asked him to write a commentary of the letter to Timothy. And others also asked him for various commentaries. He commented on the book of Job, the Gospels, *Matthew*, *Mark*¹², *Luke and John*. He also left us an explanation of the symbol of the 318 (Fathers of the Council of Nicaea) and of the divine liturgy, a work on the Humanity of Our Lord; another on perfect behavior; a refutation of those who consider sin to be cognate with nature; a book on the Holy Spirit; another on the priesthood, another in which he refutes those who practice magic, letters called "pearls"; a refutation of Eunomius, another of Apollinaris; a treatise on a deceiver (Antichrist) and a letter addressed to a renegade; an explanation of the doctrine of Arius; and a volume against those who fail to see the parabolic element in the reading of books.

In short, Theodore never refused the request of anyone and his pen never touched any Scriptural writing without giving a perfect explanation.

⁷ Theodosius I, defender of the Nicæan Creed (Socrates, *HE* 5,6) and an anti-Arian was very probably in written contact with Theodore. The Interpreter actually met Theodosius in Constantinople, together with Theophilus of Alexandria and various other bishops who had gathered there in order to solve the problem of the candidate for the see of Bostra in 394 (cf. PG 138, 449-456). Both figures are well-known for their anti-Arian activities. In fact, as related by Socrates (*HE* 5,8) and Sozomeno (*HE* 7,9), the Fathers of the Council of Constantinople of 381, which was convoked by the Emperor, recognized Theodosius's merit for having re-established peace among the Christians.

⁸ Basil ?

⁹ Eustratius ?

¹⁰ Eusebius ?

¹¹ Peter ?

¹² In the catalogue of Abdi'sho no mention is made of Mark. It is very likely that Theodore did not make a commentary on the Gospel of Mark, in that he regarded it as being an abbreviation of *Matthew*.

He commented on the New Testament, Jeremiah, Ezechiel and Daniel; he composed a book in which he refutes all those who introduce novelties; he filled this book with outstanding material and called it "the book of pearls" because it is similar to a set of well-ordered, precious pearls. He dedicated himself to his studies over a period of fifty years.

3) Points of convergence and disagreement

The two catalogues agree on some very concrete points, but they differ on others. We shall note only a few of these points of divergence and of agreement. For instance, Alpe requests the commentary on Genesis (the *Chronicle of Seert* speaks of the Pentateuch). The commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes was written in response to the request of Porphyry (the *Chronicle of Seert* translated "at the request of Marphoria")¹³. At the same time there is a striking similarity in the enumeration and titles of the works, in spite of the independent origin of both catalogues. For this reason these two sources are of sound historical value. Of course, it must be admitted that, from a literary and historical point of view, the catalogue of Abdi'sho is far more exhaustive. Careful examination of the way the material in this catalogue is ordered shows a more logical arrangement of the works: the author moves from the Old Testament to the New, whereas the *Chronicle of Seert* jumps between the two, enumerating the holy books without following any clear design.

Many modern authors, on the basis of the extant fragments, believe that Theodore commented on the following Old Testament books: Genesis, Psalms, the twelve minor Prophets, Samuel, Job and Ecclesiasticus (=Sirach)¹⁴.

Vosté supports the view that Theodore commented on no more than two of the historical books because he did not regard them as divinely inspired, acknowledging the gift of prudence solely in the authors of *Job* and *Samuel*. This same scholar affirms that beyond all doubt Theodore wrote commentaries on *Job* and *Qohelet*(=Ecclesiaste)¹⁵. The bishop of Mopsuestia did not, however, comment on the Gospel of Mark, since the material it contains is to be found in the other synoptics. He also commented on the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline corpus, including the Letter to the Hebrews. It seems less likely that he commented on the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse.

¹³ Cf. J.M. Vosté, 'La Chronologie de l'activité littéraire de Théodore de Mopsueste', in *RB*. 34 (1925) 61.

¹⁴ Cf. O.F. Fritzsche, *De Theodori Mopsuesteni vita et scriptis commentatio historico-theologica*, (Hallis Saxonum 1836), reproduced by Migne, PG 66, 1-104, an extremely important study for understanding the author we are dealing with. Also H.B. Swete, *Theodori Episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Paulii commentarii. The Latin version with the Greek fragments and with an introduction, notes and indices in two volumes, Cambridge v. I Introduction, Galatians-Colossians (1860); v II Thessalonians-Philemon, Appendices, Indices*, (Cambridge 1882) and H. Kihn, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten* (Freiburg 1880).

¹⁵ Cf. J.M. Vosté, *art. cit.*..., p. 63.

Judging from this information, the literary activities of the Interpreter must have been immense, although unfortunately most of his works have disappeared. Thanks to these two catalogues, it is possible to reconstruct an extensive list, even though it does not reflect all of his writings. The list of his works may be divided into two main groups: exegetical and theological.

4) Antiochene Biblical exegesis

The origin of the Antiochene exegetical method, which tends towards literal interpretation by contrast to the Alexandrian allegorical method, probably goes back to Lucian of Antioch¹⁶ (in the second half of the third century). Be that as it may, the most outstanding representatives of Antiochene biblical exegesis are Diodorus of Tarsus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus. It was these authors who established the features which typify the *historical* interpretation by applying the literal meaning to the biblical texts and following the model of pagan poetical commentaries and the teachings of the grammarians on the classical authors. In this way they identified the "point of comparison"¹⁷ which lies at the root of each metaphor or image.

Discussion about the two schools (of Alexandria and of Antioch) almost invariably centers on the contrast between historical-literal exegesis on the one hand and allegorical exegesis on the other hand. It is very unusual to find any attempt to identify the points of agreement between these two tendencies. Even at the theoretical level, a distinction between Antiochene *theoria* and Alexandrine allegory tends to be made¹⁸. Nevertheless, there are those who at the practical level find a certain affinity between the schools¹⁹. The Antiochenes, and among them Theodore, did not categorically reject the allegorical interpretation of certain Old Testament passages which they considered to be *typoi* prefiguring facts relating to the New Testament and to the Church. What

¹⁶ For a more exhaustive treatment of the exegetical method of the Antiochene school cf. A. Vaccari, 'La teoria esegetica antiochena', in *Biblica* 15 (1953), 93-101; P. Ternant, 'La Theoria d'Antioche dans le cadre des sens de l'Écriture', in *Biblica* 34 (1953); J. Guillet, 'Les exégèses d'Alexandrie et d'Antioche. Conflit ou malentendu?' in *RSR* 34 (1947) 257-302; C. Schaublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft de antiochenischen Exegese*, (Bonn 1974); M. Simonetti, art. 'Antioquia de Siria' in "Diccionario patristico y de la Antigüedad Cristiana" 1, (Salamanca 1991) 136-145.

¹⁷ R. Trevijano, *Patrología* in "Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos" (Madrid 1994) p. 218.

¹⁸ Cf. A. Vaccari 'La "theoria" esegetica antiochena', p. 95; P. Ternant, 'La Theoria d'Antioche dans le cadre des sens de l'Écriture', p. 145; M. Simonetti, 'Note sull'esegesi veterotestamentaria di Teodoro di Mopsuestia' *VetChr* 14 (1977) 69 ff.

¹⁹ J. Guillet, 'Les exégèses d'Alexandrie et d'Antioche. Conflit ou malentendu?', p. 257. This author emphasizes that *both* Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia see the history of the Jewish people as the preparation for the Incarnation. In their conviction that Christ is the centre of the Old Testament, both authors seek him out there from different standpoints (pp. 272; 275; 297).

they *do* reject are certain hermeneutic procedures which are typical of the school of Alexandria (the etymology of Hebrew words, authentic forcings of the literal meaning, the symbolism of animals, plants, numbers and so forth).

Beyond any shadow of a doubt, the exegetical school of Antioch reaches the height of its expression in the person of the Interpreter. According to him, the interpretation of the text moves in a straight line, with careful attention to the literal sense, and with an abundance of observations of a historical, linguistic and grammatical nature. His commentaries stand out for their extensive use of paraphrase vis-à-vis the biblical text. In keeping with his intellectual training, Theodore normally insists on the fact that the numbers contained in the biblical text serve no other purpose than to express the author's intention of underlining the number of people or things in question, whereas the Alexandrinians tend to give them a symbolic value. At the same time, the Bishop of Mopsuestia explains the text using an emphatic language following the literal meaning, making frequent use of the literary device of hyperbole. His most significant exegetical works on Old Testament material will be used by us to provide a more complete picture of his exegetical method.

5) The exegetical works

The first product of the Interpreter's exegetical labours is his commentary on the Psalms. He himself supports this opinion in his book *Adversus Allegoricos*, mentioned by Facundus²⁰ in *Pro defensione*, III, 6²¹. From what can be deduced from the above-mentioned sources, this work is dedicated to his friend Cerdo. This exegetical work was supposedly written when the author was

²⁰ Facundus of Hermiane, an African bishop, is famous for his great work in twelve volumes addressed to Justinian and generally known as *Pro defensione trium capitulorum*. This work is a defence of the Three Chapters, based on an extensive documentation concerning the various phases of the complicated Christological controversy beginning in the Fourth century (Apollinarism, Nestorianism, monophysism) and shows his outstanding capacity for grasping the significance of each episode in its historical context. The African bishop adheres to Chalcedonian theology with the addition, on the basis of Justinian's decisions, of the formula: *Unus de Trinitate passus est*. Despite Pope Vigilius' condemnation, Facundus continued to defend the so-called schismatics in his later works: *Liber contra mocianum scholasticum* and *Epistula fidei catholicae in defensione trium capitulorum*. Cf. M. Simonetti, 'Haereticum non facit ignorantia. Una nota su Facondo di Ermiane e la sua difesa dei Tre Capitoli', *Orpheus NS* 1 (1980) 76-105; R.B. Eno, 'Doctrinal Authority in the African Ecclesiology of the Sixth Century: Ferrandus and Facundus', *REAug* 22 (1976) 95-113.

²¹ PL 66, 602 BC.

barely nineteen years of age²² and was still undergoing his period of academic training²³.

The main characteristics of the Interpreter's exegetical method are present and well-defined in this commentary. This method consists of respect for the letter of the text, faithfulness to the historical data, careful attention to the stylistic characteristics of the author and, as A. Guida²⁴ says, of the study of traces in the Septuagint translation which are the result of grammatical and syntactical structures of the Hebrew language, to which Theodore had indirect access.

Each of these characteristic features is to be found in his later works. From the point of view of interpretation, Theodore regards David as being the author of all the Psalms, which were composed under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, with the aim of instructing and educating the chosen people and the whole of humanity. This commentary provoked controversial reactions. The Interpreter himself, when dedicating a work on allegory against the allegorists, admitted that this first written work of his was marred by a beginner's incompetence and that it had not been prepared with sufficient care²⁵.

The commentary on the minor Prophets, written after the commentary on the Psalms, also appears to be a youthful work of Theodore's. This commentary also is characterized by the use of paraphrase aimed at illuminating the literal meaning and the historical context, as well as by a refusal to apply a Messianic interpretation to the prophetic visions attributed to the later history of Israel.

It may be affirmed with certainty that the Interpreter composed a commentary on Genesis, the text of which has nevertheless been lost. Thanks to recent discoveries it has been possible to reconstruct this work, using various quotations taken from it²⁶.

The French scholar, E. Amann, suggests that the Old Testament commentaries were the first to appear, starting with the minor Prophets and then the other books according to the order of the canon, with the exception of the

²² Cf. Leontius of Byzantium, PG 86, pars prior 1364; I. Tellemont (Le Nain), *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles*, vol. 12 (Paris 1701-1714; Venice 1732), p. 444; O.F. Fritzsche, *De Theodori Mopsuesteni vita et scriptis commentatio historico-theologica*, (Hallis Saxonum 1834), in PG 66, 27, 602; PG 89, 368-369.

²³ Cf. L. Pirot, *L'oeuvre exégétique de Théodore de Mopsueste*, p. 51.

²⁴ Teodoro di Mopsuestia, *Replica a Giuliano Imperator*, ed. Augusto Guida "Biblioteca Patristica" 24, (Florence 1994), p.17.

²⁵ Cf. R. Devresse, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, ST 141 (Vatican City 1948), pp. 28-51.

²⁶ Cf. F. Pitit, 'L'homme créé à l'image de Dieu. Quelques fragments grecs inédits de Théodore de Mopsueste', in *Le Muséon* 100, (1987) 269-281.

commentary on Job, which was written at a later date and dedicated to Cyril of Alexandria²⁷.

At that time Theodore was a priest (382-393). On the one hand he actively preached against the Apollinarists²⁸ who promoted confusion between the two natures in Christ, while on the other hand he refuted their teachings through his written works. It is necessary to bear in mind that at the time when the Interpreter began his literary activities the Christian community of Antioch was divided between Arians and orthodox. The latter were divided between the Eustatians, headed by Paulinus who deferred to Eustatius, and the followers of Meletius with the leaders of the Nicene party in Antioch, Diodorus of Tarsus and Flavian I of Antioch, who had been ordained priest (in 362) by his predecessor Meletius. Concern over this Antiochene schism is a constant theme in the writings of the Interpreter²⁹.

The New Testament commentaries came after the works on the Old Testament in the following order: Matthew, Luke, John and the Letters of Paul.

It is highly probable that the Interpreter, during the last years of his episcopate, dedicated his time primarily to theological works. The treatise *Adversus asserentes peccatum in natura insistere* may be considered as an echo of the controversy between Pelagius and his opponents in Palestine. Belonging to the same period we have the work *Adversus Allegoricos* and also *Contra Apollinarem*, which was written after the *De Incarnatione*. Other works from this period are: *Ad Monachos*; *De Perfectione Operum*; *De Sacerdotio* and probably also *De Legislatione*. The treatise against the religion of those who practise magic seems rather more difficult to place.

²⁷ E. Amman, 'Théodore de Mopsueste', in *DTC* 15/1 (1946) 235-279.

²⁸ Apollinarism cannot, of course, simply be reduced to the confusion between the two natures in Christ. Apollinarist doctrine can be traced back to the movement's founder, Apollinaris of Laodicea (315-392 circa) who, when speaking of the unity of Christ conceived *hipóstasis* as the composite being of the incarnate Verb, that is, the substantial integration of the flesh with the Verb. For this reason he excluded human reason from the being of Christ, as though he were a subject capable of auto-determination. Apollinaris defined Christ as "incarnate God" without yet having any notion of the hypostatic union of his two natures. The doctrinal crisis provoked by Apollinarism led the Christological councils (Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451) to formulate dogmatically the faith of the Church. See the description of Apollinarist doctrine also in the penultimate page of this article. For reference see: E. Muhlenberg, *Apollinaris von Laodicea* (Göttingen 1969); C. Kannengiessse, 'Une nouvelle interprétation de la Christologie d'Apollinaire' *RSR* 59 (1971) 27-36; R. Hubner, 'Die Hauptquelle des Epiphanius (Panarion, Haer. 65) über Paulus von Samosata: Ps-Athanasius, Contra Sabellianos, *ZKG* 90 (1979) 55-74; Id., 'Gotteserkenntnis durch die Inkarnation' *Kl.* 4 (1972) 131-161.

²⁹ H.B. Swete, *Theodorus (26) Bishop of Mopsuestia*, in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*, (London 1887) p. 936.

With the help of Assemani and Mai³⁰, it is possible to add to the catalogue of Abd'isho a commentary, or at the very least a letter, on the *Song of Songs*, which, according to Swete, was destroyed under the influence of Theodoret of Cyrus³¹.

With the help of Leontius of Byzantium³² and of Abd'isho³³ it is possible to deduce that Theodore wrote commentaries on the gospels of *Matthew, Luke and John*³⁴, of which only a few scattered fragments³⁵ have come down to us.

³⁰ *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca*, 7,1 (1854) 1-389.

³¹ Amongst the erudite members of the Antiochene school (Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore, John Chrysostom) Theodoret stands out on account of his extensive typological reading of the Old Testament. The destruction by Theodoret of the commentary or letter dealing with the *Song of Songs* stems from the fact that Theodore regarded the work as a love song which could therefore not be recognized as belonging to the canon of Holy Scripture.

³² Cf. PG 86 pars prior, 1384. Leontius of Byzantium (+543), from Constantinople and defender of the dogma of Chalcedon, continues even today to pose problems concerning his historical and doctrinal role. Leontius lived most of his life in Constantinople, where he is known to have moved in Nestorian circles and his Origenist tendencies are also well-documented. He has left us several polemical works which reflect topics and concerns linked to the Christological debates of his time. His contribution to the debate with the monophysites is to be found in *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, Solutio argumentorum a Severo objectorum* and *Triginta Capita contra Severum*. Apart from these polemical works he also engaged in extensive literary activity: *Dialogus contra Aphtartodocetas* and *Deprehensio et triumphus super Nestorianos* in which he refutes Theodore's thinking. His theological convictions often give rise to contradictory interpretations amongst researchers. Opinions regarding him have become increasingly more negative over time, to such an extent that he is currently considered as being heterodox. Rather than a theologian of Cyrillian stamp and, after having distinguished between him and Leontius of Jerusalem, he is now regarded as a diphysite or, in other words, as a Nestorian. His rigorous logic and his dialectical skills make him one of the most outstanding spokesmen of VIth century theology. For a more exhaustive treatment of the question see S. Rees, 'The Literary Activity of Leontius of Byzantium.', *JThS* 19 (1968) 229-242; S. Otto, *Person und Subsistenz. Die philosophische Anthropologie des Leontius von Byzanz* (München 1968); B. Daley, 'The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium', *JThS* 27 (1976) 333-369; H. Stickelberger, 'Substanz und Akzidens bei Leontius von Byzanz', *ThZ* 36 (1980) 153-161; PG 86, 1268-1396, 1901-1976 and CPG 6813-6820.

³³ Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 3, pp. 32-33.

³⁴ Cf. L. Pirot, *op. cit.*, p.80.

³⁵ Cf. Referring to the Gospel of Matthew, see CPG² n° 3840 and to the Gospel of Luke, see E. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, IV (Berolini et Lipsiae 1924-1925), p.52; cf. A. Guida, 'Il Commento a Luca di Teodoro di Mopsuestia. Frammenti, veri e presunti', in *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 45 (1991) pp. 59-68.

Chabot's publication on the Gospel of St. John³⁶ sheds light on certain aspects relevant to this topic, using as its basis a Syriac translation of a manuscript in the National Library in Paris. As regards *Mark*, it seems that the Fathers of the Church provided no exhaustive commentaries on this Gospel since they regarded it as a compendium of *Matthew*.

We are also indebted to the *catenae* tradition for certain portions from the Commentaries on the Pauline letters, which were written after the gospel commentaries. Extensive fragments have survived, especially from the commentary on the letter to the *Romans*. Further commentaries exist on the First and Second Letters to the *Corinthians*, as well as that on the Letter to the *Hebrews*³⁷.

It is worth inserting at this point a brief *excursus* in order to go over the main phases in the research which eventually made it possible to attribute to the Bishop of Mopsuestia the commentary on the Pauline letters. In the 17th century, when the Benedictines edited the works of St. Ambrose, they came across a manuscript from Corbie which made reference to a Latin commentary on the letters of St. Paul. Rabanus Maurus had already attributed this work to the Bishop of Milan and for this reason the Benedictines assigned it to St. Ambrose³⁸. During the same period, R. Simon, defending the orthodoxy of this commentary, attributed it to a certain Hilary, deacon of Rome³⁹. The Benedictine Pitra was looking for a commentary of Hilary of Poitiers on the Pauline epistles and drew the conclusion that the above-mentioned commentary belonged neither to the Roman deacon nor to St. Ambrose, but rather to Hilary of Poitiers. What were the reasons which supported this hypothesis? The heresies mentioned by the author, that is, Marcionism, Manichaeism and Novationism all existed at the time of Hilary of Poitiers. Moreover, the description of a paganism which had been defeated though not yet totally eradicated coincided reasonably well with the circumstances of the period in which St. Hilary lived. These motivating factors were strongly criticized by Jacobus of Halle⁴⁰, who insisted that Pitra's speculations lacked any solid foundation. As Pirot points out, Jerome's catalogue, which is reasonably complete, does not attribute any work on the letters of St. Paul⁴¹ to St. Hilary. De Halle demonstrates that the author of

³⁶ Cf. J.B. Chabot, *Commentarius Theodori Mopsuesteni in Evangelium Johannis* (Paris 1879).

³⁷ Cf. M. Geerard, CPG 2, nn. 3846-3848.

³⁸ Cf. L. Pirot, *op. cit.*, p.82.

³⁹ Cf. R. Simon, *Histoire critique des principaux commentateurs*, p. 113 ff., quoted by L. Pirot, p. 82.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. De Halle, 'Über Zwei neu entdeckte exegetische Werke des kirchlichen Alterthums', in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für christliche Wissenschaft und christliches Leben*, 5, 1854.

⁴¹ L. Pirot, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

the commentary written in Latin had in mind, as his main concern, the Pelagian controversies.

Therefore the commentary found by Pitra in the Corbie manuscript could not belong to Hilary of Poitiers. As a result, it was impossible to identify the real author. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the exegetical method, which is unfailingly based on grammatical analysis and historical data by contrast with the allegorical method, the text (as De Halle emphasized) could only belong to the Antiochene school, and the most characteristic author who employed that method was Theodore of Mopsuestia. After further exhaustive research De Halle concluded that the commentaries attributed by Pitra to St. Hilary are, beyond all doubt, a translation of Theodore's commentary⁴².

In 1880 Swete⁴³ published his first volume dealing with Theodore's commentary on the Pauline Epistles; the second appeared in 1882. Swete's edition is based on the Greek text of the so-called "Chaine de Gramer" (Mss Coislin n° 204) and on the Latin text of the codex Ambiansis, and at times on the Corbeiensis and at others still on the codex Harleianus⁴⁴. Swete was convinced that the Latin translation faithfully reproduced the now-lost Greek original.

It may be deduced from the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, that access to this text was possible on the basis of a Latin translation of the commentary on the minor letters, which was carried out towards the year 415⁴⁵.

The problem of the identity of the author of the commentary on the Pauline epistles has still not yet been solved. Many attempts have been made to attribute it to various well-known authors, but no single hypothesis enjoys the unanimous consensus of all the scholars and researchers into his works. In view of its non-authenticity, the author of the work was dubbed with the title of "Ambrosiaster"⁴⁶. The elements which lead scholars to think that the anonymous author of the Ambrosiaster is a Jewish convert lie in the special attention shown to the problem of the incredulity of the Jews, whose institutions are extremely familiar to the author who at the same time hopes they will embrace faith in

⁴² J. De Halle, *op. cit.*, "Pitra der Herausgeber des Spicilegiums schreibt diese Werke dem Hilarius von Poitiers. Es unterliegt aber keinem Zweifel, dass sie Übersetzungen der Kommentar des Theodorus sind".

⁴³ H.B. Swete, *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Pauli commentarii*. The Latin version with the Greek fragments with an Introduction. Notes and Indices in Two Volumes, Vol. I Introduction, Galatians-Colossians (1880); Vol. II, Thessalonians-Philemon, Appendices, Indices, (Cambridge 1882).

⁴⁴ Cf. L. Pirot, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁴⁵ CPG 2, n° 3845.

⁴⁶ A. Pollastri, *Ambrosiaster. Commento alla lettera ai Romani. Aspetti cristologici*, (L'Aquila 1977); Id., 'Sul rapporto tra cristiani e giudei secondo il Commento dell'Ambrosiaster ad alcuni passi paolini (Gal 3, 19b-20; 4,4; Rom 11,16,20,25-26a; 15,11)', in *SSR* 4 (1980) 313-327; I. Speller, 'Ambrosiaster and the Jews', in *"Studia Patristica"* 18/1 (Oxford-New York 1982) 72-78.

Christ; to the relationship between the Mosaic law and faith in Christ; to the problem of Judaizing Christians; to the attitude of pagans with respect to the Christian message; to the presentation of Trinitarian and Christological faith, and so forth.

In Strohmann's⁴⁷ opinion, the commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, which we possess in a Syriac translation, dates back to the time of the Interpreter's episcopate.

It has been said on various occasions that only a few of the Bishop of Mopsuestia's writings have come down to us because his works were destroyed: we need only think of the so-called "defenders of the faith", the Emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III, who condemned all writings connected with Nestorius and Pelagius and ordered them to be burned⁴⁸. In fact, during the course of the Vth Ecumenical Council in 553 the anathemas against Nestorius and Theodore were pronounced⁴⁹. As a consequence it must be recognized that the almost systematic destruction of Theodore's writings represents a severe limit for even the most accomplished of researchers. We often find passages taken from our author thanks to quotations made by his opponents⁵⁰, such as Leontius of Byzantium⁵¹. It should not be forgotten that the extracts collected by his adversaries may well have been manipulated with a view to using them against him. Thanks to the translations into Syriac made by the school of Edessa, various of the Interpreter's writings were saved. Many of these translations were already carried out in the 5th century, and reflect the esteem in which the Bishop of Mopsuestia was held.

In order to reach a better understanding of the Interpreter's exegetical method, we shall provide a succinct overview of the Old Testament exegetical

⁴⁷ W. Strohmann, *Das syrische Fragment des Ecclesiastes-Kommentars von Theodor von Mopsuestia* (Wiesbaden 1988).

⁴⁸ Cf. O Fritsche, *De Theodori Mopsuesteni vita et scriptis commentatio historico-theologica*, in PG 66, 21; E. Sachau, *Theodori Mopsuesteni fragmenta syriaca* (Leipzig 1869), p. 4.

⁴⁹ During the course of the Vth Council certain passages from the imperial edicts of Theodosius II (401-450) were read, and as a result it was necessary to seek out and destroy all the manuscripts of Diodore, Theodore and Nestorius: "Nemo igitur audet sacrilegos codices ab eis expositos et maxime a Theodoro et Nestorio et contrarios verae doctrinae et expositioni venerabilium Episcoporum qui Ephesi collecti sunt, legere aut possidere aut scribere. Oportere enim eos codices cum omni diligentia requiri et inventos publice coram omnibus comburi". J. Mansi, *Sanctorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Florence-Venice 1759-1798) 9,250. Valentinian III (424-455) sponsored various measures against the Nestorians (Codex Justinianus I, 1,3; 5,6) and the Pelagians (Id., I, 2, 12; PL 48, 409).

⁵⁰ L. Abramowski, 'Über die Fragmente des Theodor von Mopsuestia in Brit. Libr. add. 12.156 und das doppelt überlieferte christologische Fragment', *OrChr* 79 (1995), 2 ff.

⁵¹ Cf. PG 86, 1384.

works, and in particular of the commentaries on *Genesis*, the *Psalms* and the *Minor Prophets*.

a) The Commentary on Genesis

Following the list given by Abdi'sho, Theodore edited a commentary on *Genesis* in three volumes, dedicated to the "*great Alpaia, working with method and learning*". The Seert Chronicle, on the other hand, affirms that it was Alifa who asked him to provide a commentary on the Pentateuch, which he did in three volumes⁵². Photius declares that he had known other writings which predated this commentary on *Genesis*⁵³.

Confirmation of what Photius⁵⁴ says may be found in the treatise by John Philoponos⁵⁵, which quotes Theodore with reference to the explanation of the creation⁵⁶. The elements suppressed by Philoponos in his work *De opificio mundi* can be recovered from the treatise by Nicephorus⁵⁷. Sachau postulates that the Syriac tradition preserved the end of the first chapter of the

⁵² *Chronicle of Seert*, Addai Scher, PO 5, 289.

⁵³ Regarding the classification of the exegetical works, Devreesse invites the reader to consult the notes which are preserved in the Morchalianus manuscript and in Coislin 204.

⁵⁴ Photius was born in Constantinople in around 820; he was professor of philosophy and a member of the Senate during the regency of Theodora (843-858). After his election as patriarch and subsequent deposition, he died in 891. The significance of Photius stems from his contribution to Church history, from his rôle as a theologian and humanist, and in the richness of his library which consisted of 279 works, called *codices*, which testify to his extensive intellectual interest in philology, lexicography, metrics, sacred and profane history, medicine, philosophy, theology etc. The most outstanding feature of Photius is the considerable interest he showed in ecclesiastical literature, even at the time when he was still a layman.

⁵⁵ John Philoponus, an Alexandrian by birth and an Aristotelian in matters intellectual, produced extensive literary works over the period 520-570. Aristotelian realism was to indelibly mark his Trinitarian and Christological reflections, which are permeated by philosophical realism. Both Catholics and Monophysites accused him of tritheism, since he applied Aristotelian realism - which considered only individual natures as really existing - to the Trinitarian sphere, thus attributing to the three *hipóstasis* three distinct natures. Needless to say, the tritheism in question was purely verbal. In fact, in response to these accusations, John studiously avoided speaking of three deities and even made explicit declarations of his belief in the consubstantial Trinity, in one only essence or nature, in one only divinity, that it is the one, true God. Cf. PG 86, 61; H. Martin, 'Jean Philopone et la controverse trithéite du VI^e siècle', *SP* 5 (TU 80), (Berlin 1962) 519-524; H.D. Saffrey, 'Le chrétien Jean Philopone et la survivance de l'école d'Alexandrie au VI^e siècle', *REG* 67 (1954) 396-410.

⁵⁶ E. Reichardt, 'Le Patriarcat d'Antioche', in *RB* 45 (1936) 364-366.

⁵⁷ Cf. PG 66, 636-645.

introduction⁵⁸ which contains a summary of the work dealing with the creation exactly as it is presented in chapter 1 of *Genesis*.

Here, briefly, is the position defended by the Interpreter in this commentary. The creative act indicates the starting point of time, which has as its sole cause for existence the will of God⁵⁹, who creates out of nothing heaven and earth at the same moment⁶⁰. The Creator then adds a second act, which is the creation from nothing of two natures, a visible one which is light, and an invisible one which is the nature of our souls⁶¹.

Theodore reasserts that the other events related in chapter one of *Genesis* are little more than ornamental: the organization of the masses called into existence according to a certain design, moving from the inferior to the superior⁶², by means of the word of God which confers order upon the world. The four elements which we first meet in the primitive state of chaos are now separated, even though their reciprocal relationships limit and keep them in mutual harmony. Finally man comes onto the scene, endowed with an invisible, rational, immortal soul and a visible and mortal body, as though God wished to reflect in him the synthesis and the unity of the created world⁶³.

For the Bishop of Mopsuestia, Holy Scripture shows us the creation of a heaven and of an earth which symbolize both invisible and rational essences⁶⁴. Moreover, the comparison between the text of *Genesis* and the Psalter establishes, according to Theodore, the order of the divine praises expressed through these two levels of creation. In the first place the heavens are mentioned, followed by the world of invisible and rational natures; still lower down, at a sort of intermediate level, we find the visible super-terrestrial creatures, that is, the sun, the moon, the shining stars.... The author's intention is to demonstrate that all the incorporeal powers are part and parcel of the work of creation and, as a consequence, did not exist before creation itself.

⁵⁸ Cf. E. Sachau, *Theodori Mopsuesteni fragmenta Siriaca* (Leipzig 1879) pp. 1-20.

⁵⁹ Cf. St. Basil, *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, ed. S. Giet (Paris 1947), p.97; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Hexaemeron*, PG 44, 72 A-B.

⁶⁰ St. Basil in the first Homily (1, 6-7) also admits the simultaneous creation of the elements and their organization over the six day period. Cf. PG 19, 16-17, 20. St. Athanasius speaks of a simultaneous creation, during which all the various different species were created together by means of one single divine command (*Orat. II cont. arianos*, n° 60), PG 26, 276.

⁶¹ St. Basil, unlike Theodore, speaks of the creation of spiritual essences prior to that which is described in *Genesis* (*Hexaemeron*, SC 26, p. 95).

⁶² Cf. St. Ambrose (*In Hexaemeron*, PL 14, 134 ff.) who admits the creation of initial elements which are subsequently transformed and coordinated during the six days of the *Genesis* account. A. Paredi, *Sant Ambrogio e la sua età* (Milan 1960), pp. 364-382.

⁶³ Cf. E. Sachau, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Gen.* 1,8.

The Interpreter re-affirms moreover that, in verse 1 of chapter 1 of *Genesis* the elements were called into existence solely by the will of God without any word being uttered, since there was no-one or nothing capable of hearing⁶⁵. Later on, during each successive act of creation, God intervenes with his Word, because the invisible and rational essences which by then exist are capable of recognizing the omnipotence of their Lord.

In the *Opus ornatum* Theodore explains the various stages connected with the separation of light from darkness, underlining the fact that day and night are effectively moments when one or the other of these two realities predominates. Nevertheless, since darkness existed before light, it is more appropriate to speak of night-day rather than of day-night. Theodore argues that the darkness which preceded the light only lasted for one night; in other words the Interpreter is trying to demonstrate that even the solemnity of Easter, during the night of Holy Saturday, seems to confirm at least implicitly the priority of night over day⁶⁶.

When he comes to deal with man, The Interpreter insists on the fact that the air, the earth, the waters and the lights which the sky-firmament sustains, produce fruits for the use of living creatures and, ultimately, for man himself. He goes on to say that the invisible powers are by God's order at the disposal of man. All the invisible and visible creatures, both mortal and immortal converge towards one only being - man, who was created by God to be the unifying link of the whole of creation. To this being, to man, God gave a visible body made up of the four elements, which feeds on their fruits, together with a rational and immortal soul similar to the invisible and rational essences. This being is the "common-relative" which the whole of creation takes pleasure in serving.

Furthermore, God granted man the power to order, reign, judge and discern. This new similarity to God, even though it cannot be compared with the supreme plenitude, expresses the greatness of the corresponding perfections in God. In this case the exegesis given by Theodore is purely theological.

Let us now examine how the Bishop of Mopsuestia describes the episode of Adam and Eve. The man created by God is not left abandoned: God takes care of him, he looks for a suitable place for him, that is paradise, where magnificent trees grow. The creation of woman is considered as being a second divine intervention (Gen.1, 26-27), without overlooking the connection with Gen.2, 20. Here too it is possible to see how the sainted author insists on the words uttered at the first moment of the creation of man: when he narrates the creation of woman he once more uses the term "let us make", because woman is in no way inferior to man in the eyes of God⁶⁷. Once the fall of man has been illustrated, first that of Eve and then that of Adam at Eve's insistence, the consequence of this disobedience is underlined in that one the one hand it opens their eyes and on the other it makes them both aware of their nakedness.

⁶⁵ Cf. St. Basil, *Hexaemeron*, II, 2, p. 143; St. Ambrose, *In Hexaemeron*, PL 14, 136 C-D.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Gen.* 2, 19.

⁶⁷ R. Devresse, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

Of the commentary of Theodore on Genesis only the first three chapters have come down to us, the rest is fragmentary. In chapter 3, 20 the Bishop of Mopsuestia speaks of Eve as the mother of all mankind. In verse 24 he explains the symbol of the Cherubim who prevent Adam from returning paradise.

b) The Commentary on the *Psalms*

In the catalogue of Abd'isho we read that Theodore expounded David in five volumes for Cerdon and his brother; however the *Chronicle of Seert* states that Cerdon asked him for another commentary on David, which Theodore produced in three volumes⁶⁸.

Theodore was twenty when he published his commentary on the Psalms⁶⁹, and he refers back to it in his later works⁷⁰. Of this commentary we are in possession of the fragments published by Migne⁷¹ which deal with Psalms 1; 2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 15; 16; 17; 26; 28; 29; 30; 32; 34; 39; 40; 49; 52; 53; 54; 57; 58; 59; 67; 68; 71; 72; 73 and 74. Baethgen⁷² also published 17 Psalms which Theodore applied to the Maccabees, namely: 43; 46; 54-59; 61; 68; 73; 78; 79; 82; 107; 108 and 144. Baethgen used as his basic text a Syriac extract from the commentary by Theodore. According to Pirot, he used the treatises of Cordier, Mai and Migne. However the material which began to be attributed to the Interpreter as a result of the discovery of the Coislin 275 manuscript was attributed by these authors to Diodorus of Tarsus⁷³. Mercati subsequently resumed the research into the commentary on the Psalms using as his basic text the Irish codex C.301 of Ambrose⁷⁴. Mercati's studies show that the commentary on the Psalms was mistakenly attributed to Jerome, that the title *Hieronimi expositio super Psalterium* was added in the 15th century and that the work was translated not from the original, but rather from the Latin translation of a Greek commentary.

⁶⁸ Cf. Id., *Le Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes (L-LXXX)*, ST 93, (Vatican City 1939).

⁶⁹ Cf. L. Pirot. *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

⁷⁰ Cf. In *Gl* 2, 18, in PG 66, 225; In *Zac* 9, 10 in PG 66, 556-557.

⁷¹ Cf. PG 66, 648-696.

⁷² F. Baethgen, 'Der Psalmen Commentar des Theodor von Mopsuestia in syrischer Bearbeitung', in *ZATW*, 5 (1885) 53-101 and 'Die Siebzehn makkabäischen Psalmen nach Theodor von Mopsuestia', in *ZATW* 6 (1886) 261-288; Cf. L. Pirot, *op. cit.*, p.72.

⁷³ Cf. Id., p.73.

⁷⁴ G. Mercati, *D'un palimpsesto Ambrosiano contenente i Salmi esapli e di un'antica versione latina del commentario perduto di Teodoro di Mopsuestia al Salterio* (Turin 1896).

In 1902, Lietzmann seems to have found an Antiochene explanation of Psalms 32-72 and, basing his conclusions on the Coislin 12 manuscript (13th century), he attributed this fragment to the Bishop of Mopsuestia⁷⁵.

Devreesse's seminal study dealing with the commentary on Psalms 50-80 would appear to complete the preceding work. This text is of fundamental importance for a correct understanding of the Bishop of Mopsuestia's first work.

In the passage concerning the commentary on the Psalms quoted by Facundus⁷⁶, it may be noted that Theodore admits his own limitations, particularly from the vantage point of hindsight. He basically regrets the negligent way the work was written, the imperfections of style and various common mistakes. This commentary has been the object of constant research, which gradually succeeded in recovering a considerable number of short fragments.

Devreesse⁷⁷ also confirms that Theodore, while commenting on the minor Prophets, frequently refers the reader back to his commentary on the Psalms, which is even referred to by the Council of 553. Facundus himself, for example, quotes from the commentary on Psalm 44.

The "catenae" on the subject of the Psalms elaborated first by Barbero⁷⁸ and later by Cordier⁷⁹ were to be of great value in the task of reconstructing the commentary in question. Both Mai and Migne made decisive contributions to this research. Lietzmann⁸⁰, in the course of his analysis of the Coislin 12 manuscript, discovered that a part of the commentary ought to be attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia. However, in Devreesse's opinion these and other corroborative proofs do not demonstrate that the text dealing with the Psalms is

⁷⁵ H. Lietzmann, 'Der Psalmencommentar Theodor's von Mopsuestia', in *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, (1902) pp. 333-346.

⁷⁶ Cf. Facundus of Hermiane, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum*, 3,6 in PL 67, 602 BC: "Ego quidem, quod nostra sic laudes, non alii cuiquam imputo, quam amicitiae quam circa nos habes, quam etiam in multis at magnis rebus semper ostendisti, et maxime quando ea quae scripta sunt in Psalmos miraris, quae etiam priam ceterorum omnium scripsimus. Non autem quantam oportuerat habuimus circa istam rem diligentiam: passi enim sumus quaecumque incipientes, ut evenit, in imperitia scribendi constituti. Siquidem et multas immutationes illo tempore quae nostra sunt susceperunt, quas non est praesentis temporis enarrare; ex qua causa magis negligenter a nobis composita sunt plurima, et maxime illa quae prima sunt".

⁷⁷ Cf. R. Devreesse, *Essai*, p. 28.

⁷⁸ D. Barbero, *Aurea in quinquaginta Davidicos Psalmos graecorum catena interpretante* (Venice 1569).

⁷⁹ Cf. B. Cordier, *Expositio Patrum Graecorum in Psalmos* (Antwerp 1643-1646), vol.3.

⁸⁰ Cf. H. Lietzmann, *Der Psalmenkommentar Theodor's von Mopsuestia*, in *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie Berlin* (1902), pp. 334-346.

truly authentic. The interesting articles by Vosté⁸¹ on this subject should not be forgotten. It should also be mentioned that the works based on C 301 inf. are of especial interest⁸². Lastly, Giovanni Mercati attempts to relate the Milan manuscripts with those of Turin, and insists that the texts could possibly belong to our author⁸³.

As regards theology, both these works testify to the nature of Theodore's vision of things in that he does not feel it necessary to change the method he inherited from the Antiochene masters and which he found suited both to his resources, and to his own intellectual bent⁸⁴.

There are certain authors who believe that the Psalter used by Theodore was the *Vulgata* of Antioch, the same as that used by John Chrysostom and Theodoret⁸⁵, and that is a composite text, the origins of which go back to the Septuagint translation, as was the case with all the Greek texts of the Old Testament translated from Hebrew. The opinion of Theodore concerning this point is peculiar to him. He does not accept the official translation used by the churches belonging to the Patriarchate of Antioch. According to him, the "official" translation contains forms, words and expressions which are meaningless, and which prevent a clear and direct understanding of the text⁸⁶.

The Interpreter's intention was that of correcting certain passages in the Psalter which seemed to have been distorted during the various phases of its transmission. In this case he has recourse to outside evidence in order to get back to the origins of the text, in so far as this is possible, even to the extent of dealing with the minutest details of the tradition concerning the sacred Scriptures. The first such proof is, obviously, the Hebrew text, even though we are by no means certain of exactly what he meant by the word "Hebrew", Hebrew books, Hebrew characteristics and so forth. Our author seems not to have known the Hebrew language, and used as his basic text a Greek translation of the Holy Scriptures.

⁸¹ Cf. J.M. Vosté, 'Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes', in *Angelicum* (1942) 191-198; Id., 'Mar Iso'dad de Merw (vers 850) sur les titres des Psaumes', in *Bibl.* 25 (1944) 210-235; 261-296.

⁸² Cf. G.L. Ascoli, 'Il codice irlandese dell'ambrosiana edito e illustrato', in *Archivio glottologico Italiano* 5 (1878-1889) 529-531; Wh. Stokes - J. Stachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, I, (Cambridge 1901) pp. 7-483; R.I. Best, *The Commentary on the Psalms with Glosses in Old-Irish Preserved in the Ambrosian Library, (Manuscript c 301 inf.)* Collotype Facsimile, with Introduction, Published by the Royal Irish Academy (Dublin-London 1936) p. 11 ff.

⁸³ Cf. G. Mercati, *I frammenti inediti dell'antica versione latina del commento di Teodoro Mopsuesteno ai Salmi*, ST 11 (Rome 1903) pp. 93-105.

⁸⁴ Cf. R. Devreesse, *Essai*, p. 55.

⁸⁵ Cf. H.B. Swete, II, pp. 340-345; G. Braukmann, 'Der Psaltertext bei Theodoret', in *Mitteilungen der LXX Unternehmung, Heft 3* (1911).

⁸⁶ Cf. H.B. Swete, I, p. 16, 19; R. Devreesse, *Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes (L-LXXX)*, p. 214 ff.

This detail shows that the Interpreter, because of his lack of knowledge of Hebrew, had to make use of other instruments in order to understand it. It appears that he knew Syriac well, given that he employs it, though this fact in itself is not enough to guarantee sufficient understanding of Hebrew.

The frequency of Semitic *idiomata* in his writings is very low; moreover, the text of the Antiochene Psalter was improved with the help of ancient Greek translations. Other translations are still extant, such as those of Symmachus, Aquila and Theodotion, but Theodore rarely has recourse to them.

The comparison between the Antiochene Psalter and the Hebrew text and the ancient translations is the first step in the process of correcting the text. The second step consists in checking the integrity and the authenticity of the manuscript⁸⁷. In this case it would be fascinating to analyze the not infrequent omissions and textual divergencies, but for reasons of limited space we refer the reader to the various specialized studies which exist on the subject.

In reality, Theodore was the first and the last of the ancient commentators to use literary criticism in this context. He was perfectly well aware that the obscurity of many passages is due to the difficulties facing those who had to translate: the Hebrew language itself and the style used in Scripture. He also underlines the fact that it is impossible for the Greek language to reproduce faithfully the Hebrew text without affecting the clarity of the meaning⁸⁸. The Interpreter insists on the difficulties caused by the differences between the verbal conjugations in these two languages: he points out that Hebrew has a wealth of different forms while at the same time it is lacking in moods and tenses. Having corrected the text and after explaining the most frequently used symbols in the Scriptures, the author then goes on to attempt to explain the Psalms. Furthermore, in one of his comments he sets precise limits to the use of rhetoric, emphasizing that the preacher when using the Scriptures should quote, adapt and tailor them to his needs.

Our Bishop pays special attention to those authors who, in his opinion, are trustworthy because they follow the same text as the one he himself uses; all other commentators are rejected. Before beginning his commentary on any given Psalm, he considers it taken as a whole. This method, which Theodore calls *uJpovqesi*" (argument), enables him to distinguish fifteen principal themes which he subsequently divides into two groups.

The Bishop of Mopsuestia is firmly convinced that the author of the Psalms is David who, inspired by the Revelation of the Holy Spirit, assumes the role of various figures of the Old Testament, whose existence is indicated at different points in the story of salvation. In this way David puts himself in the shoes of the figure in question, body and soul, plays out his role and indicates the guidelines they have to follow. This way of interpreting the Davidic prophecies adopted by

⁸⁷ Cf. K. Staab, *Die Pauluskatenen nach den handschriftlichen Quellen untersucht* (Rome 1926). p. 187; H.B. Swete, I, p. 159.180.

⁸⁸ Cf. R. Devreesse, *Commentaire sur les Psaumes*, p.512.

Theodore is authentically original, since it is always David who speaks, sees and imparts instruction. In effect, the Interpreter's exegesis of the Psalms is based on two key elements which seem to us of fundamental importance: the literal summing up of the text in question and, within the framework of prophetic vision, David and the chosen people at various points in their history. This constant insistence on the figure of David himself characterizes the Antiochene exegetical method as opposed to the Alexandrian allegorical method.

The close friend of St. John Chrysostom explains in his commentary how the Apostle Paul uses the Psalter. He does not look for prophecies, but rather proofs on which to base his teaching. The passages he quotes are useful examples, simple juxtapositions and perfectly coherent adaptations of the texts. He then goes on to say that when the Apostle introduces into his arguments against the Jews certain complaints from Psalm 13, 13 (*Rom. 3, 12*) he does not do so with the intention of drawing attention to a prophecy which has come true, but rather because he feels that he can distinguish in his opponents the same attitude or feelings which made David believe that his fellow-men rejected him. Thus what the king-prophet says about the Assyrians, namely that they are puffed up with pride, Paul applies to the Jews of his time. Mar Theodore proposes that we should do likewise: quote, adapt and tailor the material to their circumstances⁸⁹.

It would appear that in the commentary on the Psalms translated by Devreesse there is no trace of messianic elements, nor do we find references to the Saviour awaited by the Jews. However, if we take into consideration Psalm 88, our author would seem to demonstrate the contrary.

Which of the Psalms were effectively considered as being "messianic"? Here the Interpreter's vision of things tells us that it was not a matter of preparing the chosen people, so much as a way of expressing the extreme concern of God for the whole of mankind.

As regards the understanding of Psalm 2 (*Quare fremuerunt gentes?*), the Bishop of Mopsuestia states that the Christ of the passion appears to David and, according to our author, announces to him that his imperial right hand and his sovereign power shall rule over the created world after the Resurrection. Both St. Peter in *Acts* and St Paul in the Letter to the *Hebrews* also insist on this aspect. Our author affirms that the Jewish exegetes, on the other hand, made attempts to eliminate all references in this prophecy to Our Lord in favour of Zorobabel or of David. However their arguments are not valid, since in this case the reference is explicitly to the Man-God, the Risen One who receives the right to rule supremely over all.

⁸⁹ Cf. K. Staab, *Die Pauluskatenen nach den handschriftlichen Quellen untersucht*, p. 117; R. Devreesse, *Commentaire sur les Psaumes*, p. 85: "ut nos facere solemus, non solum cum scribimus aliqua sed et cum in ecclesiis disputamus ac dicta nostra volumus scripturarum testimoniis adprobare, quae sermoni nostro similitudine magna iungantur".

As regards Psalm 8 (*Domine, Dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum*), Theodore affirms that it is the triumphant Christ prophesied by David who is referred to here⁹⁰.

Once again the Interpreter considers that it is to Christ, together with his Church, that Psalm 44 refers (*Eructavit cor meum*). Jewish exegesis treats this text as alluding to a king and a queen (Solomon and his wife). However, Theodore interprets the king as Christ and the queen as the Church, his spouse. In this way our Bishop places himself in the place of David in order to intone the epithalamium. Christ draws towards himself the admiration of his contemporaries and of those who believe in him and he heals them by means of the splendour of his presence. At the right hand of Christ stands the Queen, that is the Church. She, in her turn, constitutes the Body of which Christ is the Head, the community of believers united to Him through faith. The Church is endowed with spiritual charisms by Christ and these graces abound in the souls of the Saints.

Psalm 109 is also considered to be messianic. Although we no longer possess his commentary, there are certain important clues which enable us to suppose that the Interpreter effectively elaborated his commentary along these lines⁹¹. These various elements taken from Theodore's commentary on the Psalms provide us with confirmation of the Interpreter's exegetical method. For a more complete presentation of this commentary we refer the reader to monumental work of the French author already mentioned on several occasions during the course of this study.

c) Commentary on the minor Prophets

The Commentary on the twelve minor Prophets is preserved in the manuscript Vat. gr. 2204, belonging to the 10th century. A second copy of this manuscript is also kept in the Vatican Library, but it dates back only to the 16th century: Vat. gr. 618, which is missing the part dealing with Zechariah. Both these manuscripts are also to be found in the Hofbibliothek of Vienna (suppl. gr.

⁹⁰ Cf. E. Sachau, *Theodori Mopsuesteni fragmenta syriaca*, p. 48 ff goes back to the theme of the economy already developed in the commentary and says: "Beatus David gratia Spiritus sancti totam gubernationem quae futura erat praevidit, et Deum creatorem universi propensum futurum et inhabiturum esse in homine salvationis nostrae causa eum similitudinem servi esse assumpturum et eam secum unam (parem) redditurum et unione cum ea universum recturum esse. Miratus autem est de misericordia eius et stupefactus est de multitudine honoris hominum, quod nos huius dignitatis dignatus est, ut inhabitaret in natura nostra. Etiam hoc praevidit revelatione Spiritus, eum cuique homini notum futurum Deum et creatorem universi et in creatione nomen eius laudem habiturum esse, et quemque hominem cogniturum esse creatorem suum, qui antea iis (hominibus) non notus fuerat. Et de his duobus miratus est, de uno quod eos qui ad malum sese verterunt, ad bonum reducit de altero quod hanc actionem agit in homine....".

⁹¹ Cf. G.I. Ascoli, in *Archivio Glottologico Italiano* 5 (1878-1879), 529-531.

10 of the 15th century and Theol. gr. 55 of the 16th century)⁹². This commentary was published by Mai in 1825 and 1832 on the basis of the 10th century manuscript, by Wegern in 1834 and by Migne in 1859⁹³ and would appear to be of a later date than the one dealing with the Psalms⁹⁴. The commentary on the minor Prophets is also characterized by its use of paraphrase aimed at clarifying the literal meaning of the text and also its refusal to give a messianic interpretation to the prophetic visions, which he applies to the later history of Israel.

Herbst attempted to show that the information given by Abdi'sho concerning the composition of a commentary by Theodore on the four major Prophets lacks any sound foundation. His theory is that the Vth Council would have mentioned such a work and that the prophecy of Is. 7,14 would not have been applied to Christ⁹⁵. The German scholar develops his case with a logic which at first glance is impressive but which, however, loses its value if we give credit to the affirmation by Facundus concerning Isaiah⁹⁶ and to Abdi'sho⁹⁷ who states the contrary. Despite the very sparse information we have concerning the commentary on the major Prophets, it is certain that Theodore did in fact write it.

Theodore expounded the twelve Prophets in two volumes, perhaps for Mar Trius or even for Mar Touba (the exact name of the person to whom it was dedicated remains to this day doubtful). Nevertheless, what interests us above all is what the commentary contains, rather than the historical details of its composition.

⁹² Cf. J.M. Vosté, 'La Chronologie de l'activité littéraire de ThJodore de Mopsueste', RB 34 (1925) 64.

⁹³ In PG 66, 124-632.

⁹⁴ Cf. H.N. Sprenger, *Theodori Mopsuesteni commentarius in XII prophetas* (Wiesbaden 1977); Teodoro di Mopsuestia, *Replica a Giuliano imperatore*, ed. A. Guida, *Biblioteca Patristica*, p. 19.

⁹⁵ Cf. W. Herbst, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1834, p. 488: "Dass Theodor die grossen Propheten commentiert habe bezweifle ich darum; weil sie von den von der Synode aufgestellten Censoren nicht erwähnt worden, was nicht denkbar ist; wenn Commentare über den Jesaia una Daniel vorhanden und dieselben in dem Geiste una nach den Grundsätzen, die in Commentare über die kleinen Propheten herrschen, abgefasst waren, oder wie wäre es denkbar, dass ein biblisches Commentar, in welchem weder Emmanuel, Jes 7,14; noch der Knecht Gottes auf Christus bezogen war (den dass Theodor keine von bieden Stellen von Christus erklärt hätte, kann als gewiss angenommen werden) hätte ohne Rüge bleiben können?"

⁹⁶ Facundus, *Pro defensione*, 11,7 in PL 67, 819: "In expositione quoque Hesaiae prophetae libro quarto sic ait".

⁹⁷ J.S. Assemani, *Biblioteca Orientalis* III, pp 31-32: "Isaia quoque et Ezechielem et Ieremiam et Daniele singulos singulis commentatus est et dilucidavit, quibus finem imposuit labori suo in Testamentum Vetus".

in 516. The last prophecy was that of Malachi: God will enter into the temple and will administer justice.

These are the salient points of the sacred history proclaimed by the Prophets and which cover the period extending from the destruction of Samaria up until the peaceful occupation by the Jewish people of its land.

The Bishop of Mopsuestia states that the Prophets were chosen in order to keep the chosen people on the path pre-ordained by God with a view to the advent of Christ. In this way the coming of Christ into the world and his universal work of salvation cannot be regarded as a novelty within the context of the divine salvific plan, but rather as the crowning point of the divine will from the very beginnings of salvation history. In fact, Theodore considers the Prophets to have been the first to receive God's assurance of salvation, while at the same time he is convinced that the true realization of this promise is made manifest in all its fullness only in the universal reign of Christ. Our eminent Antiochene theologian regards Christ as being the one and the same Lord of both Testaments. For this reason we can accept the statement which affirms that God constituted the contents of the Old and New Testaments around one, unitary principle. First of all he decided to reveal to us the future state of things, the origins of which are to be found in the economy of Christ. He then placed us in our present context in order to promote us to the life of the world to come, thanks to the resurrection of the dead, with the intention of showing us the splendor of all the good things to come which await us there. In this way he revealed his divine plan to us.

At this point our author says that God has to provide clearer instructions than the preceding ones, which were suited only to the purely spiritual domain. Shadows and figures are inadequate and shall be replaced by a new teaching method: the figure anticipates the "type", which in the context of the biblical symbols used by our author is of crucial importance.

6) Works on theology, discipline and liturgy

The major representative of the Antiochene school not only dedicated himself to biblical hermeneutics, but he also produced dense studies on theological topics which reflect the discussions and polemics of his times.

His dogmatic writing on the subject of the *Incarnation* is very probably one of the masterpieces of the school of Antioch. The scattered fragments⁹⁹ which have come down to us attest to the immense theological effort made by the Interpreter in order to expound and define the question of the human and divine natures in Christ, together with their co-existence in one single person against the Arians on the one hand, and the Apollinarists¹⁰⁰ on the other. This work, as Dewart states¹⁰¹, was to exercise a determining influence on the development of

⁹⁹ M. Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, 2, n° 3856.

¹⁰⁰ Teodoro di Mopsuestia, *Replica a Giuliano Imperatore*, p.20.

¹⁰¹ J.M. Dewart, 'The influence of Theodore of Mopsuestia on Augustine's Letter 187', in *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979) 113-132.

Augustinian Christology. The *De Incarnatione*, alluded to by Cyril of Alexandria in his letters LXX and LXXIV, was taken up subsequently by Facundus in his *Pro Defensione* LIX, 3,747.

Concerning the treatise *Adversus Eunomium*, the catalogue of Abdi'sho refers to two different works. According to Devreesse, one of these dates from the period when Gregory of Nyssa wrote his work against the above-mentioned heretic, whereas the other is aimed at defending Basil against Eunomius and is posterior. It would appear that Theodore interrupted his writing of this second work in order to occupy himself with the commentary on the Gospel of St. John, at the request of the Bishop Porphyrius¹⁰².

Adversus asserentes peccatum in natura insistere, which we know of thanks to the *Collectio Palatina*¹⁰³, quotes various passages from a work by Theodore against St. Augustine who defended the doctrine of original sin¹⁰⁴. Photius also quotes the work under the title: *ADĪ HJ@H8Xk @J" HNbf, 46" Ē @J κ<T: O BJ" \, 4 J@H • <2Df B@LH* the work clearly consists of the refutation of a doctrine concerning original sin¹⁰⁵. In the catalogue of Abd'isho this work is referred to under the title: *And two volumes against those who say that sin is inborn*. In the Chronicle of Seert, on the other hand, we read: "A confutation of those who claim that sin is cognate with nature". This work is also mentioned in the chronicle of Barhadbshabba 'Arbaia¹⁰⁶.

Adversus magiam. Photius describes this work in cod. 81: 1, *@*f D@L BD, F\$LJXD@ B, DĀ JOH !< A, DF*4: " κ 4OH 6" Ā JV ° JOH, ŪF, \$, \ " H *4' N@N,, BDĪ H 9 " FJ@b\$4@ > | > • D: , <\ " HĪ D: f: , <@, PTD, BVF6@B@ *¥ JLkPV<@J"*¹⁰⁷. This book deals with the doctrine of the Persian magicians who adored fire, which our author counters with the Church's teaching on the origin of the world. From what Photius' summary tells us, after refuting Zoroaster's doctrine in the first volume, Theodore then goes on to explain the Christian understanding of the creation and salvation wrought by Christ. It is worth mentioning that, when speaking of the end of the world, the Interpreter contemplated the ultimate salvation of all men through the work of Christ; in

¹⁰² R. Devreesse, *Essai*, pp. 49-50. According to the information given by Photius (Cod. 4: U<, (<é F20 1, @*é D@J ! <J4@PXT I βB¥D% F4B, \@L 6" J,, +Ū<@ \@L X< 8Ī (@4 6X) there is only one work written against Eunomius.

¹⁰³ Cf. M. Mercatore, *Collectio Palatina*, 9, 2482.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. E. Amman, 'Théodore de Mopsueste', in *DTC* 15, 270-272.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. PG 103, 513 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Barhadbshabba 'Arbaia, *Histoire ecclésiastique (Histoire des saints Pères persécutés à cause de la vérité)*, ed. F. Nau, PO IX, p. 505: "A l'époque, en effet, où la question se posa chez eux de savoir si le péché dépendait de notre volonté ou s'il était déterminé par notre nature, ils envoyèrent vers lui, comme vers l'inventeur de la vérité, pour qu'il l'établît à ce sujet. Et lui, brûlant du zèle de la piété, fit deux livres qui sont connus par toute l'Église et il établit la vérité de l'orthodoxie". Cf. R. Devreesse, *Essai*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. PG 103, 281.

other words, he believed in the "apocatástasis". What draws him to embrace this doctrine of the recapitulation of the whole of creation at the end of time is his concept of the history of salvation as springing forth and developing from one single divine act of creation and redemption which is articulated in two distinct phases within the history of mankind. These two phases are: that of sin under the sign of the Law and, subsequently, that of life which will come about under the sign of the salvation wrought by Christ, who re-establishes in his twofold nature the link between the earthly and heavenly realities broken by the sin of Adam¹⁰⁸.

Amann affirms that no trace remains of the following three works: *Ad monachos*; *De obscura locutione* and *De perfectione operum*, all of which figure in the list given by Abd'isho¹⁰⁹.

The same author also states that the *Adversus allegoricos*, published in five volumes, appears to be identical to the *De allegoria et historia contra Origenem*, of which Facundus preserves a few extracts¹¹⁰.

The *De assumente et de assumpto* is a work dealing with the Incarnation. In the catalogue of Seert it corresponds to the refutation of Apollinaris of Laodicea and his supporters, who viewed the incarnation of Christ as the assumption by God of a human aspect, as though it were a matter of putting on an external form of clothing, rather than assuming a complete human substance. According to these heretics, God the Word, in the guise of a soul, entered the body of the Virgin Mary as though she were little more than an article of clothing. As a result of this interpretation, the Logos was a subject endowed with free will, whereas the body was merely an object which acts and suffers without possessing any will of its own. Of the four volumes - at least - which went to make up this work, we currently possess only twenty or so fragments¹¹¹.

The *De sacramentis* (De mysteriis) and the *De fide* were identified as a result of the discovery made by Mingana. These are catechetical works aimed at preparing candidates for baptism, and as such witness to the pastoral activities of the Bishop of Mopsuestia¹¹². In the documents of the Vth Ecumenical Council

¹⁰⁸ Cf. T. di Mopsuestia, *Replica a Giuliano Imperatore*, p.26. Concerning the doctrine of the double catástasis, see R.A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, (Oxford 1963), pp. 160-172; S. Zincone, *Studi sulla visione dell'uomo in ambito antiocheno (Diodoro, Crisostomo, Teodoro, Teodoreto)* (L'Aquila/Roma 1988), pp. 39-45.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. E. Amman, art. cit. in *DTC* 15/I (1946) 235-279, especially col. 240.

¹¹⁰ Facundus of Hermiane, *op. cit.*, 3, 602 ff.

¹¹¹ CPG 2, n° 3858.

¹¹² Regarding the catechetical instruction of the Interpreter much has been written; here we limit ourselves to mentioning only those studies which may be helpful in understanding Theodore's doctrines better: R. Tonneau, E. Devreesse, *Les Homilies Catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste*, ST 145, (Vatican City 1949); F.J. Reine, *The Eucharistic Doctrine and Liturgy of the Mystagogical Catecheses of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington 1942); J. Nowak, *La relation entre la célébration des mystères*

we find an extract identified as coming from the *Liber ad baptizandos* nn. 35-39; 41; 42. These catechetical works were proclaimed to the catechumens who were preparing to receive baptism during the Easter vigil. Above all, they provide a complete and coherent presentation of our author's theological vision. As regards the interpretation of these homilies, modern scholars are divided between those who, like Amann, propose that Theodore be re-habilitated as orthodox¹¹³, and others who, like Jugie¹¹⁴, find in them traces of Nestorianism.

Writings which are considered as works of spiritual direction are mentioned in both catalogues of Theodore's texts. Abd'isho speaks of a volume on the *Priesthood*, concerning which we have hardly any further information; another work entitled *Ad monachos*, another on the *perfection of good works* and, finally, and yet another one on *perfect conduct* (*Chronicle of Seert*).

In his *De Spiritu Sancto*, to which Leontius of Byzantium refers in his *De Sectis* 4,3¹¹⁵, Theodore, shortly after his consecration as Bishop on the occasion of a conference he gave in Anazarbe, defends the divinity of the Holy Spirit against the Macedonians. The rest of his works are reflected in the lists contained in the two catalogues constantly referred to throughout this study.

et la vie chrétienne d'après les homilies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste (Rome 1968); T.A. Curtin, *The Baptismal liturgy of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington 1971); J.M. Lera, "Y se hizo hombre". *La economía trinitaria en las catequesis de Teodoro de Mopsuestia* (Bilbao 1977); H.M. Riley, *Christian Initiation. A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ambrose of Milan* (Washington 1974); J.M. Sanchez Caro, *Eucaristía e historia de la salvación. Estudio sobre la plegaria eucarística oriental*, "Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos" 438 (Madrid 1983); B.D. Spinks, 'The East Syrian Anaphora of Theodore, Reflections upon its Sources and Theology' in *EphLit* 103 (1989) 441-455; E. Mazza, 'La formula battesimale nelle Omelie di Teodoro di Mopsuestia', in *EphLit* 104 (1990) 23-34; H.G. Thümmel, *Bilderlehre und Bilderstreit*, (Würzburg 1991); R. Zaczynski, *Johannes Chrysostomus. Catecheses Baptismales, Taufkatechesen I-II* (Freiburg 1992); A. Geltson, *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* (Oxford 1992); P. Bruns, *Den Menschen mit dem Himmel verbinden. Eine Studie zu den katechetischen Homelien des Theodor von Mopsuestia*, CSCO 549 (Louvain 1995).

¹¹³ E. Amman, 'La doctrine christologique de Théodore de Mopsueste', in *RSR* 14 (1934) pp. 161-190; Id., 'Un nouvel ouvrage de Théodore de Mopsueste', in *RSR* 20 (1940), pp. 491-528; J.M. Lera, 'Théodore de Mopsueste' in *DSp* 15 (1991), pp. 385-400. This last author provides a systematic presentation of the teachings of the Interpreter, based essentially on the Catechetical Homilies, which for him offer "un nouvel éclairage sur son orthodoxie" (col.392).

¹¹⁴ M. Jugie, 'Le "Liber ad baptizandos" de Théodore de Mopsueste' in *EOr* 34 (1935), pp. 257 ff.

¹¹⁵ Cf. PG 76, 1221 A.

As regards the chronology of Theodore's theological works, we refer the reader to the article by J.M. Vosté¹¹⁶ on account of the interesting material it contains.

All of the various works mentioned hitherto testify to the intense literary activity of Theodore. There is no doubt that the exaggerated information given by his disciple John of Antioch, when he speaks of ten thousand volumes, nevertheless clearly witnesses to an entire life-time dedicated to the study of the bible, theology and spirituality.

¹¹⁶ J.M. Vosté, 'La Chronologie', pp. 54 ff.