

I. Contributi

1.1. Sezioni monografiche

Philocalia

Questioni filologiche, esegetiche e storico-letterarie

a cura di

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Introduction to the thematic section

This thematic section collects the proceedings of the 17th Conference of the *Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina* held in Gubbio, May 29-30, 2019¹. The conference was dedicated to the *Philocalia*, which is among the most attractive works of the ancient Christian literature, in general, and of the Alexandrian one in particular, not only because of the peculiarities of its creation, edition, transmission, but also because this text, since the time of its original project, was proposed as a florilegium highly representative of Origen's investigation and exegetical reflection, as well as of his spiritual thought.

So, while the 'logo' of the conference, the letter Φ – i.e. the golden section and arithmetic expression of beauty – alluded to the fact that the work at the centre of the conference was taken into consideration also because of the an ethical-aesthetic criterion on the basis of which the contents had been selected, the subtitle *Philological, Exegetical, and Historical-literary Questions* immediately offered the different reading registers of analysis to which the work can and must be subjected – one could say 'radiographed' – through the critical examination of the philologist, the exegete, or the specialist of early Christian literature and culture.

The title of the first contribution, by Éric Junod, outlines the vicissitude of *Phil.* and poses the essential question, i.e., the genesis of the writing: *De l'anthologie de textes d'Origène, primitivement anonyme et sans titre, que la tradition intitula Philocalie et attribua à Basile de Césarée et Grégoire de Nazianze*. After a reference to M. Harl's *Introduction to Philocalia* 1-20 (SC 302, Paris 1983), to N. McLynn, *What Was the 'Philokalia of Origen'* (2004), and to the most recent research on the manuscript tradition (a contribution by C. Faraggiana and F. Pieri of 2008), Junod's study discusses the problems that have not yet reached a definitive solution and tend to reemerge with some urgency (*Questions. Les sources sur l'anthologie. Une anthologie sans préface et sans titre. De l'interprétation de «Philocalie d'Origène» dans la lettre de Grégoire. Un souvenir de la part de Grégoire et de Basile. Puis Basile et Grégoire seront désignés les compilateurs de l'anthologie. Une anthologie bipartite et centrée sur les problèmes posés par l'Écriture et en particulier son interprétation de textes paraissant nier l'existence du libre arbitre? Deux textes qui intriguent parce qu'ils ne sont pas tirés d'une oeuvre d'Origène*). These questions and problems pertain strictly to *Phil.* and to its compilers. We do not know in what specific place they worked: we should not exclude an ecclesiastical library, which could serve as a *scriptorium*. However, who, even before the activity of the compilers, made the attempt to anthologize texts written by an author on whom there were conflicting opinions? What was his primary purpose? The absence of a preface and a title tend to multiply questions, while the *Letter to Theodore*, bishop of Tiana, written by Gregory (*ep.* 115), and the two *Prologues* that appear in most of the manuscripts remain essential sources. Gregory's letter accompanied a codex ($\pi\upsilon\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$) sent by Gregory and Basil to Theodore of Tiana as a gift, containing «extracts from Origen's *Philocalia*». However, this letter does not allow to assert that the two Cappadocians were the authors of this codex. Nor do the two *Prologues* that belong to the two main branches of the tradition definitively resolve the question: 5 lines is the length of the 'short' prologue of branch A (prior to the sixth century); about 90 lines the one of the 'long' prologue of branch B, dating back to the ninth century. Both are anonymous: only for the 'long' prologue C.H. Turner has hypothesized Photius as the author. Common to the two prologues is the fact that they do not provide the title of the work and that they limit themselves to the generic definition «this book»: $\beta\acute{\iota}\beta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ is, if anything, flanked by $\sigma\upsilon\lambda\lambda\omicron\gamma\acute{\eta}$ or $\epsilon\kappa\lambda\omicron\gamma\acute{\eta}$. The anthology, therefore, was born without

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a preface and without a title. The title *Philocalia* is attested by the *Letter* of Gregory in reference to the *πικρίον* which is given to the Theodore, but which would contain only a part of what deserves to be defined 'Philocalia of Origen' or the 'best of his production', in the same sense in which Eusebius of Caesarea (cf. *H.e.* VI 26) defined the whole of his works as 'philocalia of Irenaeus'. But even this statement must be accepted with reserve, because there are gaps and inconsistencies as it happens in *Phil* 20 and 27, whose topics are detached from the preceding and following themes. In conclusion, the *Philocalia* presents itself as a problematic work since its inception. The collection is a work that, without a title and without a preface, would have been conceived and created by an anonymous compiler. While Gregory and Basil would have used this anthology with particular appreciation, to assert without reservations that the two Cappadocians have composed the work is «une marque d'inertie intellectuelle qui ne fera pas progresser l'étude de la réception d'Origène au IV siècle».

The contribution of F. Pieri and C. Faraggiana di Sarzana offers a re-examination of the tradition of *Phil*, which only from the sixteenth century takes the name of *Philocalia*. The investigation leads to reconsider the question of the archetype and to examine some complex vicissitudes of the manuscript and printed tradition. The Byzantine manuscripts, in fact, transmit two editions of this anthology: the 'vulgar edition' was printed in 1618, forty-four years after the publication of the first Latin translation (1574) – in this regard the contribution is particularly valuable as it offers an unpublished description of the oldest codex, ms. *Patmos* 270. A second edition, prepared in the ninth century in the Photian milieu, is transmitted by the mss. *Marc. gr.* 47 and *Vat. gr.* 389: the reciprocal relationship of the two manuscripts must be analyzed again in detail for a future critical edition, also on the basis of the recent restoration of the initial sheets of *Vat. gr.* 389.

The two following contributions are both dedicated to the presence of CC in the *Philocalia*. G. Sfameni Gasparro investigates the presence and transmission of CC within the collection (*Il Contra Celsum della Philocalia: le ragioni di una scelta*). The title suggests that a comparison is required between the text of the apology composed by Origen as transmitted by the manuscripts and the sections preserved by the anthology. The texts taken into consideration are the following: *Phil* 15, extracted from CC 6 and 7 (against the philosophers who depreciate the style of the Scriptures and who defend the aesthetic primacy of the Greeks, while declaring the ugliness of the Lord); *Phil* 16, excerpts from CC 3 (against those who attack Christianity because of the divisions of the Church); *Phil* 17, extracts from CC 1 and 5 (against those who do not believe that there is a difference between the various names of God); *Phil* 18, extracts from CC 1 and 3 (against the Greek philosophers who accuse Christians of following a 'crazy' religion of which sailors, perverse tax collectors and deceivers were followers); *Phil* 19, extracts from CC 3 (in defense of the faith which is not superstition and against those who do not recognize God in the Jesus who had a mortal body); *Phil* 20, extracts from CC 4 (against those who affirm the existence of men because of irrational beings, who believe in metempsychosis and in the deceit of orionistics); *Phil* 21, extracts from CC 5 (on the dispersion of souls endowed with reason); *Phil* 23, excerpts from *CGn* 2 and CC 2 (on destiny, on God's providence, on man's freedom over the stars as signs). The selection of the passages extrapolated from CC is therefore not accidental. The selection is functional to better understand the reasons of a debate which, even after almost a century, Origen was able to fuel by comparing his own thought with that of the author of the *Alethes Logos*, an 'authoritative exponent of *Hellenismòs*': thus this selection reflected not only a two-way debate, but also the confrontation or clash between Christianity and Hellenism.

More anchored to the problem of the transmission of texts is the second intervention dedicated to CC: *Frammenti dell'Alethes Logos di Celso nella Philocalia – Punto di partenza per una rivalutazione della 'tradizione indiretta'?* by Johannes Arnold. The first part of the contribution traces the debate (begun more than a century ago) on the value of the indirect tradition of CC in the *Phil* (siglum F) in comparison with the direct tradition based on the ms. *Vat. Gr.* 386 (= Ms. A). The results achieved by P. Koetschau, P. Wendland, F.A. Winter and E. Preuschen are summarized and compared: from this comparison it emerges that it is not correct to prefer tradition A or F in principle, but that it is necessary to enter into the individual cases, without depreciating the indirect tradition. The second part takes into consideration the value of the indirect tradition in those cases in which the lessons of the direct tradition are problematic and questions whether *Phil* deserves greater reliability – compared to Ms. A – for what concerns the transmission of Celsus' own words. In the third part, a number of examples are offered of how some lessons of *Phil* can contribute positively to the reinterpretation of both the *Alethes Logos* and the *Contra*

Celsum in their respective contexts of composition. Therefore *CC* deserves particular emphasis in view of a re-evaluation of the indirect tradition. The contribution selects some fragments, provides the text according to tradition A and F, mentions the position of past editors, offers an analysis of the text discussing the variants provided by the critical apparatuses, proposes some arguments in favour of the indirect tradition, of course taking into account the problem of a possible intervention of the copyist, analyzes the text also considering the lexical use and the way of arguing of Origen, who repeatedly uses *Celsus'* terms and phrases. From the scrupulous analysis of the selected fragments, conducted with almost mathematical rigor, Arnold is able to affirm that *Phil* – therefore the indirect tradition compared to the direct one – has probably preserved the correct lessons.

E. Prinzivalli's paper entitled *Il De principiis nell'economia della Philocalia*, begins with a brief introduction, which has the function of contextualizing the specific topic of the contribution: here the phenomenon of 'anthologization' is mentioned as a privileged tool (starting with Theophrastus' doxographic collections) to transmit, at least in part, the cultural heritage of an author or to defend his thought. In the specific case of *Phil* the names of M. Harl and É. Junod are mentioned: according to the former, the purpose of the collection was to constitute a hermeneutic florilegium, while the latter is persuaded that *Phil* was a collection polemical and apologetic in character at the same time, articulated in exegesis of Scriptures, apology of the monotheistic faith, doctrine of free will. The triple articulation highlighted by Junod confirms the complex character of the work beyond the 'anthology' genre to which it belongs. The introduction offers the following list of topics: *La selezione del De Principiis nella Philocalia. Il senso delle omissioni dei filocalisti. Il ruolo del trattato di ermeneutica del De principiis nella prima parte della Philocalia. Il ruolo del trattato sul libero arbitrio del De principiis nell'ambito della seconda parte della Philocalia*. The purpose is that of identifying which criterion underlies the selection of the two extracts from the *De Principiis*, namely the so-called 'treatise on hermeneutics' (*Prin* IV 1,1-3.11) and the one on 'free will' (*Prin* III 1,1-24) and what criterion underlies the omissions, especially with regard to the apocatastatic doctrine. Prinzivalli delves into the subject and bases her reasoning on *Prin* III 1,23 handed down in *Philocalia* but also in the translation of Rufinus and Jerome; likewise the cuts made in *Prin* IV 1,1-3.11 confirm that selections and cuts are applied not so much with regard to the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul as to those affirmations connected in a way or another with the apocatastatic doctrine. In other words, the behaviour of the compilers does not follow a constant criterion and every cut is subject to debate when it turns out to be intentional. This also happens with regard to the concluding part of the hermeneutic treatise of *Prin* IV (= *Phil* 1,1-27), in particular the passages of *Prin* IV 3,9-11 on the interpretation of the descent into Egypt and other episodes narrated in *Deuteronomy* and in *Numbers*, where the amputation is applied to the strictly exegetical digression, while those concepts and Scriptural passages are maintained which could lead to the doctrine of pre-existence. Prinzivalli – with further reference to *Phil* 14 – is convinced that the philocalists are not interested in the exegesis of the text in the strict sense of the term.

F. Minonne offers a study dedicated to 'grammatical exegesis' (*L'esegesi grammaticale di Origene a partire da Phil. 14*). Although the title declares a research of an exegetical nature, in fact the 'grammatical' specification also favors philological reflections strictly linked to the *grammata* object of interpretation by Origen, whose explanation of Gen 1,16-18 is examined in particular (*Phil* 14). The exegete starts from grammatical observations that focus on the meaning of the words and on the relationship between names and predicates within the sentence. Comparing the text with the translation proposed by Aquila, Origen – providing an indispensable methodological principle – invites us to reflect on the importance of a rigorous knowledge of the language and of the λογικά indispensable to face any ethical, physical or theological question. It follows that the basis of the exegesis is the philological analysis of the text, that is, to clarify the homonyms, to dissolve the ambiguity of the words, to define the correct subdivision of the sentence thanks to the punctuation marks: these are phases of study and criticism of the text that are imposed on the exegete in order to avoid errors of interpretation that could betray the truth of the Scriptures. The methodological note expressed here by Origen finds direct confirmation in other places of his works, in which he exploits the technical knowledge of *ars grammatica* to found his own reading of the biblical passages. If we then compare some methods of Origen's exegesis with that of other Christian scholars of the second and third centuries, it is also possible to deepen the question of the use of biblical texts by Origen and other authors without neglecting the need of the audience. From the numerous texts which have been reviewed by

F. Minonne an author emerges according to whom, the spiritual meaning being the ultimate goal of the exegesis, this can be reached only after a careful study of the scriptural *grammata*, whose syntactic collocation, together with the semantic value, forms the basis of any further and even final meaning.

F. Cocchini offers a study entitled *La Philocalia e il Commento alla Lettera ai Romani di Origene*, which deals with *Phil* 9 and 25. Here are inserted two large extracts taken respectively, according to what is indicated in the titles, from book IX and book I of the *CRm*. But alongside these two extracts, the presence of a third extract also deserves particular attention: it is assumed that it may have been taken from the original XI book of *CRm*, but the Philocalists – unlike what is stated in the titles of chapters 9 and 25 – do not indicate the origin of the extract and the work from which it was obtained, but insert it in chap. 27 of the collection where, moreover, it appears as the first of the six fragments of which the same chapter is constituted. Particular consideration is given to the extract reported in *Phil* 25 and useful arguments are presented to identify the exact provenance, with an evaluation of Rufinus' translation. From the detailed comparison between *Phil* 25 and *CRm* VII 5-6 it is reasonable to hypothesize that the extract contained in *Phil* 25 could correspond to a portion of the text taken from the original *CRm* VIII 28-30.

The last contribution offered in this monographic section is that of L. Perrone, *I commenti di Origene ai Salmi nella Philocalia: il primato dell'ermeneutica spirituale e della grazia divina*. Through a specific topic, themes are retraced that we could define as characterizing not only the *Philocalia* but all of Origen's exegetical production, which, as the title states, is always aimed at demonstrating the primacy of spiritual interpretation and divine grace. Each of the themes announced in the titles of the paragraphs (*Importanza degli estratti dai commenti ai Salmi. I lemmi introduttivi: una testimonianza dei tomoi sul Salterio*; *Phil* 1,29: *L'esegesi di Sal 50 e la necessità dell'allegoria*; *Phil* 2,3: *L'esegesi di Sal 1. L'oscurità delle Scritture e il modello di un'ermeneutica intertestuale*; *Phil* 26: *l'esegesi di Sal 4, 7a e l'argomentazione scritturistica di un problema filosofico*) is addressed by constantly comparing the text of the *excerpta* with that of other works by Origen, in consideration of the fact that the extracts from *Phil.* are a partial testimony of the numerous problems that Origen had to face when explaining the Psalter: from the introductory lemmas up to the more 'obscure' passages, from which to derive primarily 'the prophetic and hidden announcement of Christ'. This requires a tireless application that puts a strain on the interpreter, aware of the *agon* he has to face and the limits of his abilities, not only when a scriptural passage is not immediately comprehensible, but also when, in the light of a correct interpretation of Scripture, one deals with elucidating the relationship between the human doctrine and the teaching of Christ, or «the scriptural argumentation of a philosophical problem», of which the excerpt of the exegesis of Ps 4.7 is an example (*Phil* 26). In conclusion, L. Perrone underlines the «basic convergence of the *disiecta membra*» of the comment on the Psalter transcribed in the sylloge and this convergence rests on the hermeneutic postulate that Origen makes his own and towards which he feels strongly responsible: the Bible is an inspired text and therefore its interpretation cannot fail to lead to the spiritual meaning in order to assert that – as can be seen from *Phil* 26 – even a philosophical concept assumes an instrumental value. As if to say: philosophy at the service of the Word, of that Word of which Origen himself wants to be the exegete and the *didascalos* at the same time.,

From the results achieved in the individual papers new research perspectives inevitably open up, which, starting from the project of a new critical edition, aim at studying the *Philocalia* in relation to the works of Origen as well as with the Christian culture of the third and fourth centuries, without neglecting the analysis of the selection made by the Philocalists and the reasons, criteria and purposes of a collection which, due to its anonymity and at the same time its presumed but not demonstrable Cappadocian paternity, is particularly attractive and fascinating.

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Abstract. This introduction to the thematic section offers a synthesis of the main results of the conference.

Keywords. Origen of Alexandria. *Philocalia*. Exegesis of Scripture. Free will. Origen and philosophy. Grammar. Hellenism.