

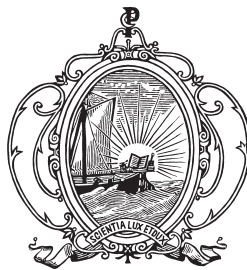
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Exegesis and Intertextuality in Anastasius the Sinaite's Homily *On the Transfiguration*

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ABSTRACT

Anastasius the Sinaite's homily on the Transfiguration discloses the meaning of Tabor by weaving together several theophanic texts. His exegesis exemplifies a specific type of christological interpretation of biblical theophanies that has close parallels in Ps.-Ephrem Syrus and John of Damascus. This is neither the spiritualizing Tabor exegesis of an Origen or Maximus the Confessor, nor a 'typological' linking of foreshadowing and fulfilment, but rather representative of what has been described in recent years as the 'Re-written Bible' approach of the Byzantine hymnographic tradition.

Introduction

It has been noted that Anastasius of Sinai is not only a reputable dogmatician and polemist, but also a well informed and skilful biblical exegete in the tradition of Origen and Maximus the Confessor, whose work with the Greek Bible offers relevant material to scholars in the field of Septuagint Studies today.¹ His *Homily on the Transfiguration*,² one of the most beautiful productions of its genre, discloses the meaning of Tabor by offering a sophisticated, beautiful, and deeply traditional weaving together of several theophanic texts – chiefly, the theophany at Bethel and at least three Sinai-events. In what follows I intend to focus on the means by which Anastasius' discourse achieves its rich intertextuality, and then show that it exemplifies a specific type of christological interpretation of biblical theophanies that has close parallels in Ps.-Ephrem Syrus and John of Damascus. This is, I argue, neither the spiritualizing Tabor

¹ Clement Kuehn, 'Anastasius of Sinai: Biblical Scholar', *BZ* 103 (2010), 55-80.

² The *Homily on the Transfiguration* is generally overlooked by both scholars of Anastasius and research on the patristic interpretation of the Transfiguration. The text still lacks a critical edition; the *editio princeps*, published by Guillou some decades ago and based only on some of the existing manuscripts seems to have attracted very little attention, and there exists no English translation to date. See Antoine Guillou, 'Le monastère de la Théotokos au Sinaï: Origines; épîclèse; mosaïque de la Transfiguration; homélie inédite d'Anastase le Sinaïte sur la Transfiguration (étude et texte critique)', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 67 (1955), 215-58; Michel van Parys, 'De l'Horeb au Thabor: Le Christ transfiguré dans les homélies byzantines', *Ir* 80 (2007), 235-66, esp. 253, 259.

exegesis of an Origen or Maximus the Confessor, nor a ‘typological’ linking of foreshadowing and fulfilment, but rather representative of what has been described in recent years as the ‘re-written Bible’ approach of the Byzantine hymnographic tradition.

The Homily as a rhetorical object

The homily was delivered on Mt. Tabor, presumably to pilgrims gathered there to celebrate the feast of the Transfiguration.³ The speaker does not shy away from describing his own experience of the event – the feast, as well as the delivery of the sermon: he is beyond himself together with patriarch Jacob (237.4, *συνεξιστάμενος*) and just like the apostle Peter, overwhelmed by the amazement of the vision (*διὸ τῷ θάμβει τῆς ὀπτασίας κατεχόμενος*) like patriarch Jacob at Bethel (*καὶ γὰρ τῷ πατριάρχῃ Ἰακώβ*), in a state of complete ecstasy and amazement, like the Apostle Peter (243.12, *ἐξιστάμενος*; 245.15, *ὅλως ἐξ αὐτοῦ γέγονεν*; 246.1, *θαμβητικῶς καὶ ἐκστατικῶς*). Depending on how far Anastasius would like to push the similarity with Peter, the experience he claims may range from deep awe and joyful excitement at the feast (254.10, *περιχαρῶς καὶ φιλεόρτως*) to a full-blown ascent to heaven and visitation of the celestial mansions – understood, in a manner reminiscent of Ps.-Macarius, as an ecstatic and visionary journey *within*.⁴ It is this divinely-induced state that

³ The title given to the homily in the manuscripts suggest that it was delivered on Mt. Tabor, presumably to pilgrims gathered there to celebrate the feast of the Transfiguration: Τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀναστασίου τοῦ Σινᾶ ὄρους λόγος εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν μεταμόρφωσιν ῥηθεις ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ Ἁγίῳ Ὄρει τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ. Anastasius at one point refers to himself standing on the mountain of Transfiguration and calling all other biblical mountains – including Sinai – to worship the transfigured Christ: Καὶ γὰρ σήμερον περιχαρῶς καὶ φιλεόρτως ἐπὶ τῆς θείας ταύτης κορυφῆς καὶ ἄκρας ἐστῶς τὴν χεῖρα προτείνων μεγάλη τῇ φωνῇ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἅπαντα τὰ ὄρη εἰς Θεοῦ προσκύνησιν συγκαλῶν βοᾷ: τὰ ὄρη τὰ Ἄραράτ, τὰ ὄρη τὰ Γελβουέ, τὰ ὄρη τὰ τοῦ Σινᾶ, τὰ ὄρη τοῦ Ἐκφαράν, τὰ ὄρη τὰ τοῦ βορρᾶ, τὰ ὄρη τὰ δυτικά, τὰ ὄρη τὰ τοῦ Λιβάνου, τὰ ὄρη τὰ τοῦ νότου, τὰ ὄρη τῶν νήσων, τὰ ὄρη τ’ ἄλλα προσκυνήσατε κλίνανα τὰς κορυφὰς ἐν ὄρει Θαβὼρ Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν (254.9-15).

⁴ ἔνθα χαρὰ καὶ εὐφροσύνη καὶ ἀγαλλίασις, ἔνθα ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ πάντα εἰρηνικὰ καὶ γαληνὰ καὶ ἀστασίαστα, ἔνθα ὀπτάνεται Θεός (244.3-4). See Ps.-Macarius: καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ καρδία μικρόν τι σκευὸς ἐστὶ καὶ ἐκεῖ ... ὁ θεός, ἐκεῖ καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι, ἐκεῖ ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ βασιλεία, ἐκεῖ τὸ φῶς καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι, ἐκεῖ αἱ πόλεις αἱ ἐπουρανίαι, ἐκεῖ οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς χάριτος, ἐκεῖ τὰ πάντα ἐστίν (Coll. II, *Hom* 43.7); before the advent of Christ, “all adornment of righteousness” – the Law, the circumcision, the sacrificial offerings, the praises – was external (*ἔξωθεν ἦν*); with the Incarnation and the giving of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, πάντα ἔσωθεν εὐρίσκειται (Coll. III, *Hom.* 8.1.5 [ed. Desprez; SC 275, 144]). On the ‘internalization’ of biblical and apocalyptic imagery in the Ps-Macarian Homilies and, more generally, in Byzantine monastic literature, see Alexander Golitzin, ‘Heavenly Mysteries: Themes from Apocalyptic Literature in the Macarian Homilies and Selected Other Fourth Century Ascetical Writers’, in Robert Daly (ed.), *Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, 2009),

leads him to burst out in a loud sermon to the pilgrims (237.5, βοήσομαι), and even to proclaim it loudly to all the mountains North and South and East and West (254.11, μεγάλη τῆ φωνῆ ... συγκαλῶν βοῶ); he invites his audience to undergo the same experience and to join him in proclamation (242.16, βοήσωμεν λέγοντες).

The self-referential elements in Anastasius' discourse are part of his rhetorical strategy, which is to set himself up as a model for his auditors: just as his experience is, as he suggests, similar to that of Jacob or Peter, so should his auditors, too, 'enter the cloud' and become one like Moses, the other like Elijah, one like James, the other like John, and to be caught up in the vision like Peter (243.7-9). The preacher simply mediates the model of the prophets and apostles to his audience. By appropriating this model, made vividly present by the very delivery of the sermon, the hearers are to be shaped into better celebrants of the Transfiguration feast, and thereby set on course for their own transfiguration.

Intertextuality

The homily is structured around several key-verses, repeated time and again by the preacher, sometimes placed on the mouth of biblical figures and sometimes appropriated as his own words. The verses are: 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God' (*Gen.* 28:17); 'It is good for us to be here' (*Matth.* 17:4); 'Let me pass to see this great vision' (*Ex.* 3:3). The line taken from the Transfiguration account is sandwiched between two Old Testament quotations, one from Jacob's vision of the ladder, the other from Moses' vision of the burning bush. This observation allows me to draw our attention to the first topic of my contribution: intertextuality.

With the quotation of *Gen.* 28:17 at the very beginning of the homily – Ὡς φοβερός ὁ τόπος οὗτος – the audience is introduced abruptly into the heart of the matter. Celebrating the Transfiguration on Tabor, Anastasius (and, by extension all those present) find themselves face to face with God. The mountain is like Jacob's ladder, piercing into heaven (237.5-6, ὁρῶ γὰρ καθάπερ κάκεινος κλίμακα ὥσπερ ἀπὸ γῆς εἰς οὐρανὸν διΐκνουσαν); and, like Jacob at Bethel, and together with him, Anastasius is beyond himself, in a state of ecstatic amazement as a result of the vision. Therefore, the only appropriate words are those of Jacob at Bethel, which he repeats: Ὡς φοβερός ὁ τόπος οὗτος, οὐκ ἔστιν τοῦτο ἀλλ' οἶκος θεοῦ καὶ πύλη τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

From here the exposition takes wings (237.10-238.1). The connection with Bethel, which establishes Mount Tabor as 'the gateway to heaven', allows

Anastasius to ‘recognize’ this mountain elsewhere in Scripture: this is none other than the mountain of Daniel’s vision, out of which the stone not hewn by human hand has been cut, the stone which now shines forth on the mountain (*Dan.* 2:45); this is the mountain of God’s sanctuary, into which the Lord has led Israel (*Ps.* 77[78]:54); this is the mountain which the Lord’s right hand has purchased;⁵ ‘a rich mountain, a swelling mountain, a rich mountain’ (*Ps.* 67[68]:16); this is the mountain in which God has delighted to dwell, and in which he will dwell forever (*Ps.* 67[68]:17). As such, Tabor is an entry-point into the highest celestial realities: ‘This mountain is the realm of mysteries; this place is the place of [things] ineffable; this stone is the stone of [things] concealed; this summit is the summit of the heavens’ (238.5-1).⁶

Anastasius repeats Jacob’s exclamation, first as his own fitting reaction to all the scriptural connections he has just discovered (238.16, ‘therefore, *I will say* again...’), then as the reaction recommended to the audience (242.16-7, ‘come, let us ascend into the mountain of the Lord, on the day of the Lord, in the place of the Lord and the house of our God ... and *let us* cry aloud saying ...’). The celebration of the Transfiguration is thus framed as an overwhelming theophanic event; moreover, since, as we shall see, Tabor offers greater things than either Bethel or Sinai, the fitting reaction must also surpass Jacob’s words at Bethel (Ὦς φοβερὸς ὁ τόπος οὗτος) and take its cue from the Apostle Peter: ‘good it is for us to be here’, καλὸν ἐστὶν ἡμῶς ὧδε εἶναι (*Matth.* 17:4).

The homily is controlled mainly by the Matthean account, which is the one prescribed by the lectionary for Transfiguration Liturgy. This is significant, since *Matthew* is the only Gospel that refers to the Transfiguration as a ‘vision’ (ὄραμα, *Matth.* 17:9). We may want to ask: whose vision? And a vision of what? The answers provided by patristic interpreters fall into several categories: christological (‘the vision of Christ’s radiance as a manifestation of his

⁵ Anastasius reads ὄρος τοῦτο ὃ ἐκτίσατο ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ rather than ὄρος τοῦτο ὃ ἐκτίσατο ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ. The ἐκτίσατο / ἐκτίσατο difference can be a simple iotacism, but the fact that there is no divergence in the manuscripts of the homily suggests that Anastasius might have used ἐκτίσατο. With ἐκτίσατο, the line acquires a christological connotation impossible to miss: κύριος ἐκτίσεν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ (*Prov.* 8:22).

⁶ τοῦτο τὸ ὄρος τῶν μυστηρίων ὁ χῶρος, οὗτος ὁ τόπος τῶν ἀπορρήτων ὁ τόπος, αὕτη ἡ πέτρα τῶν ἀποκρύφων ἡ πέτρα, αὕτη ἡ ἄκρα τῶν οὐρανῶν ἡ ἄκρα. Anastasius emphasizes the positive aspect, the opportunity given to the celebrants to accede to such heavenly realities. By implication, however, it is clear that the heavenly Kingdom, the second coming, and the glory of the righteous, are only foreshadowed (προετυπώθη), adumbrated (ἐσκιάσθη), copied as in a painting (ἐξεικονίσθησαν) in the Taboric location and the liturgical celebration: ὧδε ἡ τῆς βασιλείας προετυπώθη τὰ σύμβολα, ὧδε τὸ τῆς σταυρώσεως προεμνήθη μυστήριον, ὧδε τῆς βασιλείας ἀπεκαλύφθη εὐπρέπεια, ὧδε ἡ τῆς δευτέρας παρουσίας τῆς ἐνδοξοτέρας Χριστοῦ ἐφανερώθη κατάβασις· ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ὄρει ἡ τῶν δικαίων ἐσκιάσθη λαμπρότης, ἐν τούτῳ ὡς τὰ παρόντα ἐξεικονίσθησαν ἀγαθὰ τὰ μέλλοντα· τοῦτο τὸ ὄρος τὴν μέλλουσαν ἀρπαγὴν ἐν νεφέλαις τῶν δικαίων διὰ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ νεφέλης ἐκήρυξεν, τοῦτο τὸ ὄρος τὴν μόρφωσιν καὶ συμμόρφωσιν ἡμῶν καὶ Χριστοῦ ἀψεудεστάτως ἐμόρφωσε σήμερον (238.7-14).

own essential deity'); soteriological (a vision of the human being deified *in via*); and eschatological (a vision of the resurrection glory *in patria*).⁷ The latter two are also present in our homily. More important, however, is the fact that Anastasius exploits the verbal link between *Matth.* 17:9 (τὸ ὄραμα) and *Ex.* 3:3 (τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα) and interprets the Transfiguration not only as a vision that the disciples have of Christ, but as a vision of Christ granted to Moses and Elijah, witnessed by the disciples. This, of course, is not a novel approach. According to the Septuagint, in response to Moses' request to see God's glory more intimately (δεῖξόν μοι τὴν σεαυτοῦ δόξαν, *Ex.* 33:18), God states (*Ex.* 33:19) that he will indeed manifest himself to Moses – by parading in his glory (παρελεύσομαι πρότερός σου τῆ δόξῃ μου) and by proclaiming the divine name (κύριος) before the prophet, and showing him his back parts (τὰ ὀπίσω μου) – but insists on the impossibility of a more complete revelation: Οὐ δυνήσῃ ἰδεῖν μου τὸ πρόσωπον; τὸ δὲ πρόσωπόν μου οὐκ ὀφθήσεται σοι (*Ex.* 33:20, 23). Irenaeus of Lyon and Tertullian interpreted this to mean that the vision face to face, refused to Moses, was being postponed for a later time, so that on Tabor God 'fulfils the ancient promise' made on Sinai to Moses and, later, to Elijah.⁸ Representatives of this approach include Irenaeus, Tertullian, Ps.-Leo of Rome, Ps.-Ephrem – before Anastasius – and John Damascene, and Cosmas of Maiouma, after him. In various ways, and for a variety of reasons, these writers link Tabor with Sinai – specifically with the vision at the burning bush (*Ex.* 3:3) and with God's refusal to show his face (*Ex.* 33:20) – and identify the transfigured Jesus with the mysterious ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ὄν at the burning bush.⁹

The characters of Moses and Elijah offer Anastasius another intertextual connection, namely one between the Transfiguration account and *Hab.* 3:2, which in its LXX version reads, ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζώων γνωσθήσῃ, 'You will be known between the two living beings'. Thus, Jesus has appeared 'between the two living beings', Anastasius writes (239.19-20), both on the Mountain of the Skull (between the two thieves, in a manner befitting the Cross, σταυροπρεπῶς) and on the Mountain of the Transfiguration, between Moses and Elijah, in a manner befitting God (θεοπρεπῶς). Here again, Anastasius is part of the rich reception history of *Hab.* 3:2 LXX, which includes an application to Tabor (Christ between Moses and Elijah) and Golgotha (Christ between the two thieves).¹⁰

⁷ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1986), 100, 125, 117, 122.

⁸ Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* IV 20.9-11; Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 14.7; *Adv. Marc.* IV 22.14-5.

⁹ See Bogdan G. Bucur, 'Matt 17:1-9 as a Vision of a Vision: A Neglected Strand in the Patristic Reception of the Transfiguration', *NeoT* 44 (2010), 15-30.

¹⁰ The main strand of patristic interpretation is christological: 'God known between the two living beings' is the newborn Jesus between the ox and the ass (Cyril of Alexandria, Symeon the New Theologian, the *Gospel of Ps.-Mt.*, Eleutherius of Tournai); Christ on Tabor between Moses and Elijah (Tertullian, Augustine, Leo of Rome, the Venerable Bede); Christ crucified between

Anastasius links the Matthean ὄραμα on Tabor with the Sinai vision of the burning bush (τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα, *Ex.* 3:3), but also with the giving of the Law (*Exodus* 19) and Moses' plea for a more perfect vision (*Exodus* 33). Moses' words at the burning bush (παρελθὼν ὄψομαι τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα τοῦτο) are rendered as διαβὰς ὄψομαι τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα τοῦτο. The change from παρέρχομαι to διαβαίνω introduces a listing of Old Testament realities that need to be 'crossed over', transcended, in order to attain to the vision of God: the darkness, the tent, the blood, the veils, the cherubim, the ark. At the end of the list, Moses has finally reached the desired vision: he now finds himself on Tabor, and the verb of vision in *Ex.* 3:3 is changed from future (ὄψομαι) to aorist (εἶδον): crossing over the means of worship prescribed by the Law, I have now seen you, this great vision [διαβὰς τὰς νομικὰς λατρείας νῦν εἶδόν σε τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα τοῦτο] (248.12-3); ... crossing over the darkness of the Law, I have now seen this great, truly great, vision [διαβὰς τὸν νομικὸν γνόφον νῦν εἶδον τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα τοῦτο, ὄντως μέγα] (250.8-9); ... I have seen this great vision: you, the God that existed before me [εἶδον τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα τοῦτο ... σε τὸν πάλαι μοι θεόν] (247.13).

The content of the vision on Tabor is further specified by quoting to *Ex.* 3:14 and alluding to *Ex.* 33:13.

(247.11-2) Now I have seen you, the truly existing one ... who spoke on the mountain, *I am the He-Who-Is* [νῦν εἶδόν σε τὸν ὄντως ὄντα ... ἐν ὄρει εἰπόντα Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν [see *Ex.* 3:14, εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωυσῆν Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν].

(246.16-247: 1-2) I have seen you, whom of old I desired to see, saying, *show me yourself clearly* [γνωστῶς εἶδω σε (see *Ex.* 33:13, ἐμφάνισόν μοι σεαυτὸν: γνωστῶς ἴδω σε)] ... I have seen you, no longer turning me away on the rock of Sinai by revealing your back [ὀπίσθησαν], but made visible to me clearly [ἐμφανὸς ὀπτανόμενός μοι] on the rock of Tabor.

Overall, Tabor grants Moses the higher vision he had asked for. The reason is explained by weaving a new thread into the web of biblical references, namely *Bar.* 3:38, interpreted (as is frequent in the tradition) as a reference to the Incarnation:

(250.9-10) You that said to me on Sinai, *man does not see me and live* (*Ex.* 33:20), have now appeared on earth in the flesh and have conversed with humans.¹¹

the two thieves (Hesychius of Jerusalem, Anastasius the Sinaite, Venerable Bede); Christ between his earthly life and his life after the resurrection (Cyril of Jerusalem); Christ between the human and the divine natures (Eusebius of Caesarea); Christ between the Old Testament and New Testament (Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine, Jerome); and Christ between the present life and future life (Theodoret). Origen offers both a trinitarian and a highly complex christological reading. For the references and a discussion of the texts, see Bogdan G. Bucur and Elijah Mueller, 'Gregory Nazianzen's Exegesis of Hab 3:2 (LXX) and Its Reception: A Lesson from Byzantine Scripture Exegesis', *Pro Ecclesia* 20 (2011), 86-103.

¹¹ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν σαρκὶ ὄφθη καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συνανεστράφη. See *Bar.* 3:38: μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὄφθη καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συνανεστράφη.

Anastasius' point is that Moses' vision at the Transfiguration is superior to that on Sinai because the Lord shining with divine effulgence on Tabor is the *incarnate* Lord.

Tabor is, indeed, 'another Sinai', but also 'much greater than Sinai' (240.1, μάλλον δὲ καὶ τοῦ Σιναίου πολλῶ τιμώτερον). This remark is the opening salvo of an entire section, which develops the antithetical parallelism between the Old and the New dispensation: οἱ τύποι/ ἡ ἀλήθεια; γνόφος/ ἥλιος; νόμος / λόγος; τὰ σαρκικά / τὰ θεϊκά; τὸ ὕδωρ ἐκ πέτρας προῆλθεν ἀπιστίας / πηγὴ ζωῆς ἀνέβλυσεν ἀθανασίας; Μαρία ἐβραϊκὴ / Μαρία δεσποτική, and so forth: this is the homily's largest sustained treatment of a single topic.¹²

Typology, allegory, or something else?

One would be tempted to call Anastasius' exegetical juxtaposition of Sinai and Tabor 'typological'. This, in any case, is the judgment of John McGuckin, in 1986, and Andreas Andreopoulos, twenty years later, on the connection between Sinai and Tabor in Byzantine homilies.¹³ Such 'typology' means that the exegete acknowledges a non-allegorical, non-christological level of the text, and then posits a second – christological – level as the 'fulfillment' of the OT 'types'. By contrast, Kuehn seems to incline towards 'allegory'. Speaking about the *Hexaemeron*, he calls Anastasius' approach to Scripture 'typological, inasmuch as Anastasius often states that he does not deny the concrete facts of the creation account', although, he adds, 'Anastasius' technique ... has more in

¹² "Ὅσον ἐκεῖ μὲν οἱ τύποι προτυπικῶς διεζωγραφοῦντο, ἐν τούτῳ δὲ ἡ ἀλήθεια· ἐκεῖ ὁ γνόφος, ἐνταῦθα ὁ ἥλιος· ἐκεῖ ζόφος, ἐνταῦθα ἡ τοῦ φωτὸς νεφέλη· ἐκεῖ δεκάλογος νόμος, ὥδε ὁ τῶν λόγων προαιώνιος λόγος· ἐκεῖ τὰ σαρκικά αἰνίγματα, ὥδε τὰ θεϊκά· ἐκεῖ ἐν τῷ ὄρει αἱ πλάκες συνετρίβησαν ἐξ ἀσεβείας, ἐνταῦθα καρδίαι σοφίζονται εἰς σωτηρίαν. Τότε τὸ ὕδωρ ἐκ πέτρας προῆλθεν ἀπιστίας, νῦν δὲ πηγὴ ζωῆς ἀνέβλυσεν ἀθανασίας· ἐκεῖ ῥάβδος ἐβλάστησεν, ὥδε σταυρὸς ἐξήνθησεν· ἐκεῖ ὀρτυγομήτρα ἄνωθεν εἰς τιμωρίαν, ἐνταῦθα περιστερὰ ἄνωθεν εἰς σωτηρίαν· ἐκεῖ Μαρία μωσαϊκῶς ἐβραϊκὴ ἐτυμπάνισεν, ὥδε Μαρία θεϊκῶς δεσποτικὴ ἐγέννησεν· ἐκεῖ Μωϋσῆς τὸ τῶν ποδῶν ὑπόδημα λέλυκεν τῆς νομικῆς λατρείας προδιατυπούμενος τὴν διάλυσιν, ἐνταῦθα λύει Ἰωάννης τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὸ ἀδιάλυτον ὑπόδημα τῆς ἐνώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγου πρὸς τὴν θνητὴν ἡμῶν καὶ δερματίνην φύσιν σαφῶς βεβαιούμενος· ἐκεῖ Ἥλιος ἐκ προσώπου Ἰεζάβελ κρύπτεται, ὥδε Ἥλιος Θεὸν πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον ἐνοπριζέται (240.4-241.4).

¹³ J.A. McGuckin, *Transfiguration* (1986), 143⁷ notes the following with respect to one of the Transfiguration hymns (*He who once spoke through symbols to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 'I am He who is' [Ex. 3:14] was transfigured today upon Mount Tabor before the disciples*): 'Exod 3:14 – the revelation in the burning bush at Horeb which in its illuminated radiance is taken as a *type* of Jesus' radiance on Thabor'. A. Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (Scarsdale, N.Y., 2005), 197 also refers to the connection between Sinai and Tabor in patristic exegesis as 'fulfillment of typology'.

common with the allegorical style of Origen and other Alexandrians than it does with the historical/literal style, often called Antiochene'.¹⁴

In the homily *On Transfiguration*, the heavy emphasis on the celebrants' accession to heavenly realities relies on the assumption that the Taboric location and the liturgical celebration adumbrate, in some fashion, the heavenly Kingdom, the second coming, and the glory of the righteous, *etc.* The terms used by Anastasius (*e.g.*, προτυπώω, ἐσκιάζω, ἐξεικονίζω) would suggest that we are dealing with what Jean Daniélou wanted to call 'typology'; and yet the vertical relation between 'down here' and 'up there' would better be termed allegorical.¹⁵

The problem is that the 19th-century coinage 'typology',¹⁶ as well as the famous distinction between 'allegory' and 'typology', reflect the agenda of 19th- and 20th-century Patristics rather than the mind of patristic authors.¹⁷ Whether we choose to speak of 'allegorical', 'typological', 'figural', or 'figurative' exegesis, the more important task is to grasp what I think to be the theological foundation underlying Anastasius' reflection on Sinai and Tabor.

Quoting *Ps.* 77[78]:54 (εἰσηγάγεν αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ἀγιάσματος αὐτοῦ ὄρος τοῦτο ὃ ἐκτίσατο ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ), Anastasius renders it as follows: εἰσηγάγεν αὐτοὺς Χριστὸς εἰς ὄρος ἀγιάσματος ὄρος τοῦτο ὃ ἐκτίσατο ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ. In the LXX, the subject of the long list of beneficent acts towards Israel is God; Anastasius changes it to 'Christ'. As a result, it is Christ who leads Israel out of Egypt, Christ who guides Israel through the desert, Christ who leads them into the mountain, Christ who gives the Law on Sinai. Note that Anastasius reads ἐκτίσατο rather than ἐκτίσατο. Of course, the issue could be just the iotacism; but the fact that there is no divergence in the manuscripts of the homily suggests that Anastasius might have used ἐκτίσατο. With ἐκτίσατο, the line acquires a christological connotation impossible to miss: κύριος ἐκτίσεν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ (*Prov.* 8:22). It is important to

¹⁴ C. Kuehn, 'Anastasius of Sinai: Biblical Scholar' (2010), 58.

¹⁵ For Daniélou, typological exegesis, with its two forms – christological and sacramental – answers to the specifically Christian necessity of relating the Old Testament to the life of the Church. For instance, Joshua is a 'type' of Jesus, the flood and the passing through the Red Sea are a 'type' of Baptism, the manna is a 'type' of the Eucharist, and so on. By contrast, allegory, which has its origin in the exegesis of Homeric literature (and, later, of Plato's dialogues) is determined by the vertical relation between 'down here' and 'up there'. See Jean Daniélou, *Sacramentum futuri: Études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris, 1950); *id.*, *Bible et liturgie: La théologie biblique des sacrements et des fêtes d'après les Pères de l'Église* (Paris, 1951). In the English-speaking world, the typology-allegory distinction was discussed by G.W.H. Lampe and K.J. Woollcombe, *Essays in Typology* (London, 1957).

¹⁶ The Latin 'typologia' dates to 1840, whereas 'typology' appears in print in 1844; see David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, 1992), 254⁵¹.

¹⁷ Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (New York, 1997), 194-5, and the excellent discussion in Peter W. Martens, 'Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen', *J ECS* 16 (2008), 283-317, esp. 283-96.

notice how casual, off-the-hand, the introduction of 'Christ' is in the Psalm verse; evidently, Anastasius did not perceive this maneuver as a major articulation of his argument, and did not mark it as such.

The point is not a 'typological' relation – as the Lord led Israel into Sinai, so does Jesus lead Peter, James, and John into Tabor – but the straightforward identification of the O.T. 'Lord' with Jesus. We thus obtain a continuum of action between Christ's journeying with Israel, manifesting himself to Moses on Sinai, and later, in full glory, on Tabor:

[247.11-16; 248:1-2] Now I have seen you, the truly existing one (τὸν ὄντως ὄντα) ... you, who said on the mountain, *I am He-Who-Is* [Ex. 3:14]. I have seen *this great vision* [Ex. 3:3]: you, the God who manifested yourself in hidden and divine manner (κρυφιοπρεπῶς καὶ θεοπρεπῶς) ... you, whom of old I desired to see, saying, *show yourself clearly to me* (γνωστῶς εἶδω σε);¹⁸ I have seen you, no longer as you revealed your back [ὀπίσθοφανῶς] and turned me away on the rock of Sinai, but made visible to me clearly [ῶς ὀπτανόμενός μοι] on the rock of Tabor;

[248.14-15] It was you who, of old, came down upon the bush [Exodus 3] and drowned the might of Pharaoh in the depths;

[250.2-9] It was to you that Moses said, while eagerly expecting you (καραδοκῶν) on the mountain: 'Show me your very own glory, show yourself clearly, make yourself manifest to me if I have found grace before you.'¹⁹ For I find nothing in the whole world more lovely (ἔρασμιώτερον) than to see you and be satisfied with your glory,²⁰ your beauty, your image, your light, your words, your visitation of mankind, openly revealed, which long ago you showed forth to me mysteriously (αἰνιγματωδῶς προεσήμανας) ... having traversed the darkness of the Law I have now seen *this great vision* [Ex. 3:3], a vision truly great'.

Anastasius and the patristic exegetical tradition

Far from being original, the Sinaite is here representative of a large segment of the patristic exegetical tradition. Indeed, less explored in scholarship, and somewhat muted in the studies of McGuckin and Andreopoulos, is a strand in the reception history of the synoptic Transfiguration accounts that views the latter not simply as a vision that the disciples have of Christ, but as a vision of Christ granted to Moses and Elijah, witnessed by the disciples. Prominent among the representatives of this approach are Irenaeus and Tertullian, who

¹⁸ See Ex. 33:13: ἐμφάνισόν μοι σεαυτὸν γνωστῶς ἴδω σε.

¹⁹ Δεῖξόν μοι τὴν σεαυτοῦ δόξαν (Ex. 33:18), γνωστῶς εἶδω σε, ἐμφάνισόν μοι σεαυτὸν εἰ εὔρον χάριν ἐνώπιον σου (see Ex. 33:13).

²⁰ 250.4-5: ἔμοι οὐδὲν ἐρασμιώτερον τοῦ ἰδεῖν σε καὶ ἐμπλησθῆναι με τῆς σῆς δόξης. See Ps. 16:15: ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ὀφθήσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ σου χορτασθήσομαι ἐν τῷ ὀφθῆναι τὴν δόξαν σου; Ps. 64:5: μακάριος ὃν ἐξελέξω καὶ προσελάβου κατασκευάσει ἐν ταῖς ἀυλαῖς σου πλησθησόμεθα ἐν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τοῦ οἴκου σου ἄγιος.

used this way of linking Tabor and Sinai as an argument against dualism and monarchianism.²¹ Even after that polemical necessity had passed, however, the identification of the Lord and Lawgiver on Sinai with the Lord transfigured on Tabor continued in orations and hymns of the Transfiguration, such as those by Ps.-Leo of Rome, Ps.-Ephrem Syrus, Anastasius the Sinaite, and John Damascene.

In Ps.-Ephrem's *Sermon on the Transfiguration*, roughly contemporary to Anastasius' *Homily on the Transfiguration*,²² one reads the following:

There was joy for the Prophets and the Apostles by this ascent of the mountain. The Prophets rejoiced when they saw his humanity, which they had not known. The Apostles also rejoiced when they saw the glory of his divinity, which they had not known ... and they looked to one another: the Prophets to the Apostles and the Apostles to the Prophets. There the authors of the old covenant saw the authors of the new (οἱ ἀρχηγοὶ τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης τοὺς ἀρχηγούς τῆς νέας).

This juxtaposition assumes that the Lord who revealed himself to Moses and Elijah on Sinai is the same Lord who summoned Peter, James, and John to join him on Tabor. In unambiguous terms, 'on it [the mountain] Jesus united the two covenants ... and made known to us that he is the giver of the two'. Andreopoulos notes that 'this mutual recognition ... stressed the harmonization of the two covenants and the unity of the Church, but it also delineated the Transfiguration as a dynamic field of recognition'.²³ I think it important to emphasize a different point: Ps.-Ephrem's juxtaposition of the ἀρχηγοὶ of the two covenants – strikingly similar to what Anastasius writes about the κήρυκες and κορυφαῖοι of the Old and New covenants²⁴ – assumes that the Lord who revealed himself to Moses and Elijah on Sinai is the same Lord who summoned Peter, James, and John to join him on Tabor.

The views of Ps.-Ephrem and Anastasius are echoed by John of Damascus and Cosmas of Maiouma, whose compositions remain, to this day, part of the

²¹ Irenaeus, *Against heresies* IV 20.10-1; Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 14.7; *Against Marcion* IV 22.14-5.

²² For the Greek text, see *Ὅσιον Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρον Ἐργα*, 7 vols, ed. K.G. Phrantzolas (Thessaloniki, 1998), 7:13-30. An English translation by Ephrem Lash is available online at http://www.anastasis.org.uk/on_the_transfiguration.htm. Lash notes: 'The numbering of the sections is my own, for ease of reference. It is clear that the present form of the text cannot go back to the fourth century. Sections 13, 16 and 17 use the technical language of Chalcedon in 451 and the long section 15 is also redolent of the fifth century rather than the fourth'. Nevertheless, the passage in this homily most relevant to my argument (*Ἐργα* 7:18-19 = section 9 in the English translation) may very well go back to the real Ephrem (see *Nat.* 1.34-36; *Epiph.* 8.2-3).

²³ A. Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis* (2005), 73.

²⁴ 'Today the ancient heralds (κήρυκες) of the Old and the New Testaments have both wonderfully gathered with God on the mountain, of wonderful mysteries having become recipients ... And present with those leaders (μεθ' ὧν κορυφαίων) of the New Covenant was also Moses – that leader (κορυφαῖος) of the Law, that divine initiate of the mysteries – with Elijah the Tishbite' [239.15-17; 246.5-7].

official Transfiguration hymnography in Eastern Christianity. Thus, for instance, in John Damascene's oration on the Transfiguration, Peter learns on Tabor that the ancient revelation on Sinai, *I am He-Who-Is*, coincides with his own confession, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*:

Today, the great prince of the new covenant [Peter], who clearly proclaimed that Christ was the Son of the living God, saw the leader of the old covenant [Moses] standing beside Him [Christ] who set the law of both; and he gave a piercing cry: 'This is *He-Who-Is* [Ex. 3:14], who raised me up as prophet and sent me out as a man and a prince of the new people'.²⁵

This point – Christ 'setting the law of both covenants' and being both the one who revealed himself to Moses as 'He-Who-Is' and the one confessed by Peter as Messiah and Son of God – is further developed by the Damascene:

He who once spoke through symbols to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, *I am He who is* [Ex. 3:14] was transfigured today upon Mount Tabor before the disciples.²⁶

You were seen by Moses on the mountain of the Law and again on Tabor; formerly in the darkness but now in the unapproachable light of godhead.²⁷

The same christological interpretation of Old Testament theophanies occurs in an anonymous Georgian homily on the transfiguration, whose Greek original dates to the end of the fourth century.²⁸

This cannot be a marginal strand of interpretation. The passages by Cosmas of Maiuma and John Damascene soon became part of the Byzantine Church's festal hymnography, thus becoming widespread and theologically normative.

²⁵ John of Damascus, *Oration on the Transfiguration 2* (McGuckin, *Transfiguration*, 206). I have capitalized 'He-Who-Is' in order to make clearer the reference to Ex. 3:14.

²⁶ *Great Vespers of Transfiguration*, Apostichon (*Menaion*, 476). Except where indicated, the English translation of the hymns is taken from *The Festal Menaion* (trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware [London and Boston, 1969]) and *The Lenten Triodion* (trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware [London and Boston, 1977]), modified only to conform to contemporary use of pronouns and verbs.

²⁷ *Second Canon of Transfiguration: Ode 1, Sticheron 3* (McGuckin, *Transfiguration*, 202).

²⁸ For an edition of the Georgian text accompanied by a French translation, see Michel van Esbroeck, 'Une homélie géorgienne anonyme sur la Transfiguration', *OchrP* 46 (1980), 418-45. The text was composed in Antioch (or another city under its jurisdiction) around 380-400, and translated directly from Greek into Georgian (van Esbroeck, 'Une homélie géorgienne', 418, 422). The homilist explains that only those accustomed to approach the mountain that smoked (Ex. 19:18) and to enter the luminous darkness (Ex. 24:16-8) were summoned on the mountain of the Transfiguration (ch. 13, 440/441); he pictures Moses and Elijah addressing Jesus directly (and thereby revealing their identity to Peter): Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by 'your blessed power' (ch. 11, 438/439); Elijah speaks of 'your people' worshiping Baal and killing 'your prophets' (ch. 12, 438/439); he ascribes his own rapture into heaven to Jesus, and identifies the latter as 'he who bowed down the heavens' and 'he who touches the mountains and they smoke' in *Pss.* 143:5 and 103/104:32 (ch. 12, 440/441); finally, it was the 'terror of your glory' on Horeb that overwhelmed Elijah and forced him to cover his face (1Kgs. 19:11-2), the same glory that is now displayed 'in your servant-form' due to 'your love of humankind' (ch. 12, 440/441).

Moreover, the exegetical connection between Sinai and Tabor is also reflected in the readings assigned for the Feast of Transfiguration: the texts selected to explicate Christ's appearance on Tabor are *Exodus* 24 (the anthropomorphic appearance of the Lord to the seventy elders on Sinai), *Exodus* 33 ('the promise'), and *3Reigns / 1Kings* 19 (Elijah at Horeb).

What sort of exegesis is this? Neither Anastasius' homily, nor the Byzantine hymnographic tradition which echoes his manner of linking Sinai and Tabor fit the categories of 'allegory', 'typology', 'typological allegory', 'figural', or 'figurative'. A more illuminating category would be 'rewritten Bible', coined by Geza Vermes in 1961 and widely utilized since then to designate biblical interpretation ranging from the Palestinian Targum, to Rabbinic *midrash*, Pseudo-Philo's *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha such as the *Book of Jubilees*, or chapters 10-1 in the *Wisdom of Solomon*. For the latter, the heavenly agent at work in the Exodus events was Lady Wisdom; for *Jubilees*, it was the Angel of the Presence who gave Moses the Law; for *3En.* it was Enoch-Metatron. It seems to me that the 'logic' of Anastasius' version of *Ps.* 77:54, or his account of Christ on Sinai at the burning bush and as Lawgiver, is precisely that of 'Rewritten Bible' – rewritten, in this case, in christological key: Christ freed Israel from captivity; Christ led his people to Sinai; Christ conversed with Moses on Sinai.²⁹

Fundamental to the 'Rewritten Bible' is the claim of being divinely inspired, the result of 'charismatic exegesis', defined as 'essentially, a *hermeneutical ideology* that provides divine legitimation for a particular understanding of a sacred text'.³⁰ This aspect of 'Rewritten Bible' literature is highly significant for the case under discussion, since the homily claims to be, precisely, the poetic expression of exegetical inspiration, prompted by prophetic-charismatic experience in the course of liturgical action.

Even though the beauty and power of Anastasius' homily can only be dimmed by academic dissection of its written trace on paper, *it is good for us to be here*. If the present essay will lead to greater scholarly awareness of this wonderful text, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

²⁹ For a more detailed discussion of these points, see B.G. Bucur, 'The Mountain of the Lord: Sinai, Zion, and Eden in Byzantine Hymnographic Exegesis', in B. Lourié and A. Orlov (eds), *Symbola caelestis: Le symbolisme liturgique et paraliturgique dans le monde chrétien* (Piscataway, 2009), 129-72, esp. 162-8.

³⁰ David Aune, 'Charismatic Exegesis', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (Sheffield, 1996), 126-50, 130.

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