Exegesis and Hermeneutics in the Churches of the East

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EDITED BY
Vahan S. Hovhanessian
monasticism was to imitate the labor and obedience of the good children of Abraham, taking care of others in the community and dutifully supporting them as fellow workers in the ascetic life. For Shenoute, as we have seen, this monastic parenting was especially important for women, who had undertaken a weighty commitment when they renounced childbearing and family life in favor of communal monasticism. Shenoute describes female monastic duties using unmistakable and strongly gendered parenting language, and describes ascetic labor on behalf of others as a replacement of the suffering involved with bearing and rearing children. Laziness on the part of the women was particularly wicked, in Shenoute’s mind, because ascetic women chose for themselves to give up natural family life, unlike the biblical women he mentions who were barren but prayed to God to have children. Shenoute accuses the women of refusing to do things that they are perfectly capable of doing out of stupidity, stubbornness, laziness, and arrogance. It is important to note, finally, that these female monks were not rebelling against Shenoute’s authority per se; rather, they challenged what they perceived as the strictness of his monastic ideology. Shenoute, likewise, never criticizes the women for teaching and interpreting the scripture, as we might expect, but he strongly disagrees with the conclusions to which they come.

Melito, That New Enoch, the Divine Scribe: Typological Interpretation as Revelation of the Divine Mysteries in Peri Pascha

This study advances the hypothesis that Melito of Sardis’s typological method can be seen as a way of disclosing divine mysteries comparable to the interpretation of the heavenly mysteries Enoch conveys to his son Methuselah, to his inheritance, to the watchers, and to all of humanity. Typology, therefore, the Christian one in particular, is something more than the mere method of interpretation in which the events narrated in the Old Testament represent pre-figurations of Christ’s economy and of Christian mysteries. The typological framework of Melito’s message encapsulates a similar epistemological structure with the one present in the Jewish tradition of the divine scribe or mediator who reveals divine mysteries. This epistemological paradigm most likely occurs for the first time in the Ethiopic Enochic corpus. Melito may be envisioned, like Enoch, as a receptacle and revealer of divine information, and as a divine scribe and interpreter of the most elevated knowledge which concerns the deepest secrets of God, the universe, and the human being.

Comparable to Enoch, Melito plays the role of messenger, mediator, scribe, and translator of divine mysteries. As a distinctive mark, Melito emphasizes the mystery of economy and salvation through Christ’s Incarnation. Christ is also portrayed as descended heavenly Wisdom and revealer of the deepest mysteries of God, an element that marks a significant turning point in the paradigm that probably starts with 1 Enoch. While divine mysteries are now to be encountered on earth, ascension is preserved for the eschatological journey in which Christ raises the whole humankind to the Father. Where Enoch needed ascension to reach the heavenly realm of divine mysteries, Melito needs primarily an initiation into divine mysteries now located on earth. By doing so, Melito construes an epistemology of the divine...
in the hermeneutical context of Exod 12 by employing apocalyptic, sapiential, and mystery schemes.

**Enoch as Revealer of Heavenly Mysteries**

George Nickelsburg was most likely among the first to notice that the specific difference between apocalyptic and prophetic writings lies in the emphasis on the revelation of divine mysteries:

Moreover, the content of what is actually revealed is what is otherwise hidden, either because it derives the inaccessible parts of the cosmos and heaven, or because it lies in the future. Thus, on all counts, 1 Enoch presents information, identifies it as revealing or unveiling of secrets, and emphasizes the process of revelation. Although there are many parallels between this process and the biblical prophetic corpus, I believe that the pervasive emphasis on not simply making known, but on the previous hiddenness of what is now uncovered warrants the use of the term "apocalyptic" or revelatory as a means of distinguishing it from early prophecy.

Likewise, Markus Bockmuehl, along with Christopher Rowland and Günter Bornkamm, pointed out the extraordinary apocalyptic interest in divine "mysteries" and their revelation. For these writers, Bockmuehl continues, "mysteries" subsist in heaven at present but a glimpse of their reality and relevance can be disclosed to select visionaries who pass on this information to the faithful few (the "wise," i.e., the righteous) to encourage them in waiting for the impending deliverance (1 Enoch 1:1–9, 37:1–5, etc.). At present the divine wisdom is known only through such revealed mysteries, since her abode is in heaven (1 Enoch 42:1–3; 48:1; 49:1f). Old Testament antecedents notwithstanding, this notion of heavenly mysteries appears to have become popular only in the wake of early apocalyptic documents like Daniel and 1 Enoch.

This opinion harmonizes with one of Martha Himmelfarb’s insights, who noticed another emblematic distinction between prophetic and apocalyptic visions—unlike the prophets, apocalyptic visionaries ascend to the heavenly temple, “Ezekiel is the only one of all the classical prophets to record the experience of being physically transported by the spirit of God, but even Ezekiel does not ascend to heaven.” As shown in various studies, the heavenly temple represents a predominant feature of apocalyptic literature. The visionary, experiences heavenly vision while being transported to the celestial temple where he is allowed to contemplate the heavenly king of glory, the throne, and the myriad of angels glorifying the king.

In addition, Nickelsburg indicated another distinction between the apocalyptic visionary and the prophet. The apocalyptic visionary is not only a prophet; he is at the same time prophet, scribe, and sage. He/she is a character that accumulates the highest virtues ever mentioned in the prophetic and sapiential literature. Enoch, for example, concentrates in one individual the highest titles of the inspired person, prophet, scribe, and sage.

“Enoch” is three times called a “scribe” (12:4 [cf. 13:4–7]; 15:1; 92:1). Three times the Epistle refers to the religious leaders as “the wise” (96:9; 99:10; 104:12–105:1) reflecting the term הָבֵית הָדָשִׁים. Consonant with this observation is the frequent occurrence of in 1 Enoch of literary forms typical of the prophets: oracle chops, 1–5; a commissioning, chapters 14–16; woes and descriptions of the future in the Epistle, passim. This evidence indicates an interesting mixture of roles.

The content of the mysteries revealed to Enoch is varied, spanning from the mysteries of the temple to the mysteries of creation, and from the mysteries of history to those of human destiny. It is also worth noting that, in fact, humanity’s knowledge is the product of a series of revelations. One of the earliest parts of 1 Enoch, the Astronomical Book (sometimes titled the Book of the Luminaries, namely 1 Enoch 72–82), presents the following series of revelations: the angel Uriel reveals the secrets to Enoch, Enoch to his son Methuselah, and Methuselah to his brothers and descendants.

At that time the angel Uriel responded to me: “Enoch, I have now shown you everything, and I have revealed everything to you so that you may see this sun and this moon and those who lead the stars of the sky and all those who turn them—their work, their times, and their emergences... He said to me: “Enoch, look at the heavenly tables, read what is written on them, and understand each and every item.” I looked at all the heavenly tables, read everything that was written, and understood everything. I read the book of all the actions of people and of all humans who will be on the earth for the generations of the world.”

Enoch transmitted afterwards the mysteries to his son:

Now my son Methuselah, I am telling you all these things and am writing (them) down. I have revealed all of them to you and have given you the books about all these things. My son, keep the book written by your father so that you may give (it) to the generations of the world.

In his turn, Methuselah conveys the revealed things to the other sons of Enoch and to all the other generations. Worth noting is also the idea that the process of revelation in all its steps is accompanied by a process of reading and writing, which clearly emphasizes Enoch’s scribal status and mission. It appears that Enoch’s scribal character constituted an important tradition of ancient Judaism, as Jub 4:17–24, the recension B of the TAψ 10–11, and
Melito as Revealer of Divine and Heavenly Mysteries

I would like to begin the analysis of the series of commonalities between 1 Enoch and Peri Pascha by pointing out the apocalyptic theme of the Son of Man. First, they are hidden things revealed by the Son of Man. Second, the Son of Man is a divine figure which, unlike Enoch, does not receive revelation and wisdom, but reveals everything. “All the treasuries of what is hidden he will reveal.” Third, there is a connection between mystery and the revealed truth. Fourth, the Son of Man has soteriological power and power of judgment.

According to Melito’s vision, every mystery is a mystery of the Lord (τοῦ κυρίου μυστηρίου), since the Lord is all things (ὅσον έστιν τὰ πάντα): Law, Word, grace, Father, Son, sheep, man, God, Pascha. Unlike Enoch, Melito does not disclose cosmological and astronomical mysteries, but the mystery of divine economy, the mystery of the incarnated Lord. The centrality of the mystery of Incarnation organizes the whole history of humankind and the history of salvation as well. The history of humankind and the history of salvation are cardinal not only for Melito’s Peri Pascha, but for the entire Jewish tradition of the Son of Man (of course, excluding the idea of Incarnation). Starting with the Enochic corpus, the highest mystery revealed to Enoch is not that of a cosmic element and of its heavenly sources, but that of the vision of the Head of Days and of his chosen one, the Son of Man. Bockmuehl emphasizes the key attributes of the Son of Man: “1 En frequently features the conviction that the Messiah/Son of Man is already present and hidden with God since the beginning of the world, in order to be revealed in the eschaton (1 En 38:2, 48:2-7, 62:6f., 69:26-29).” Similar attributes about the hidden savior, the Son of Man, may also be encountered in 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and other documents. Bockmuehl points out the presence of the same idea in Col 1:24-2:5, where Jesus Christ is portrayed or identified with the Messiah, the hidden secret from all the ages and the one who encapsulates all mysteries:

[That secret purpose hidden for long ages τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἄποκρυπτόμενου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων] and through many generations, but now disclosed (νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη) to God’s people. To them he chose to make known what a wealth of glory is offered to the Gentiles in this secret purpose: Christ in you, the hope of glory. ... My aim is to keep them [Laodiceans] in good heart and united in love, so that they may come to the full wealth of conviction which understanding brings, and grasp God’s secret, which is Christ himself (τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ Ερινυῆς), in whom lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι].
For Melito, Christ the Logos is the divine agent which planned the mystery of his sacrifice in \textit{illo tempore}, manifested it as a pre-figuration in the Law and prophets, and revealed its truth in his own sacrifice:

Understand therefore, beloved, how it is new and old, eternal and temporary, perishable and imperishable, mortal and immortal, this mystery of the Pascha \[τό τοῦ πάσχα μυστήριον]\: old as regards the word; temporary as regards the model, eternal because of the grace ... \[Τ]he mystery of the Lord, having prefigured well in advance \[δὲ προτελῆ ἐξομολογώμεθα\] and having been seen through a model \[διὸ τῶν δραπέτων\], is today believed in now that it is fulfilled \[μυστήριον πίσεως τυχόντα τεκτονεῖον\].

It is worth noting that Enoch, Ben Sira, Ezra, Baruch, Paul, and Melito as mediatorial characters, have similar functions in the process of revelation. They are not the source of revelation, the source encapsulating a mystery ready to be revealed, but mediators of such a mystery to a certain human community. Furthermore, most likely the highest mystery they reveal is that of the hidden Messiah, the Christ, the Son of Man, and of his salvific manifestation, whether it be conceived of in the future, in the past, or in the present.

However, there is a significant distinction in the logic of this mystery. While for the authors of \textit{I Enoch}, \textit{4 Ezra}, or \textit{2 Baruch} the mystery still remains eschatological and the expectation of a future manifestation, for Paul and Melito the mystery is primarily economic, and their first aim is to describe it properly and persuade their audience to discover its meaning and reality. In addition, though revealed on earth through the Incarnation, the mystery still remains heavenly:

As with the perishable examples \[εἰς τῇ καρδίᾳ, ἃς τὰ τῶν οὐρανῶν\], i.e. the types of the Old Testament also with the imperishable things [their fulfillment in Christ], as with the earthly things, so also with the heavenly. For the very salvation and reality \[διὰ τῆς προφητείας\] of the Lord were prefigured in the people, and the decrees of the gospel were proclaimed in advance by the law.

Consequently, Paul and Melito are new Enoshs—new mediators of divine mysteries. Yet, perhaps inspired by Paul's typological exegesis, Melito extends the method to the mystery of \textit{Pascha}, sees the whole history of salvation through the mystery of \textit{Pascha}, and describes it through mystery terminology and the method of typology. In connection with this latter idea, one may add the following observation. Although in Paul's case someone might compare Paul and Enoch in terms of ascension—as the particular apocalyptic method of acquiring the divine revelation—Melito does not emphasize ascension, but keeps it as the eschatological event in which Christ himself will raise all humankind, for ever, in the presence of the heavenly Father. In spite of the fact that the bishop of Sardis shares the same mystery-scribal epistemology, he remains primarily an initiated sage/scribe in the mysteries of Christ rather than a visionary transported to heaven. In this way, Melito resembles more the inspired scribe Ben Sira than Enoch or Ezra of the Greek apocalyptic, who experience ascension, or Ezra of the Syriac version and Baruch of the Second Book, who received visions in their dreams.

Melito as Sage/Scribe, and Prophes

It is also worth mentioning one of the distinctive features of the scribe and sage, namely the correct or accurate interpretation of the holy texts. Here Nickelsburg, based on Baumgartner, makes a parallel between Enoch and Ben Sira, claiming that they have “somewhat the same role.” And he is most likely right since Ben Sira, along with the roles of scribe and sage, assumes prophetic roles as well.

As a sage, he \[Ben Sira\] is an interpreter of the heavenly wisdom embodied in the Torah.... Thus it is not by accident that he describes himself as a channel for wisdom's life-giving water, as one who “pours forth teaching like prophecy” (24:33). Nickelsburg concludes by adding the following new insight, “[T]he figure of the sage or scribe emerges in both texts [I Enoch and Ben Sira] as a teacher of Torah who speaks with the inspiration of the prophets.”

Another prophetic figure should also be recalled at this point in discussion. It is Daniel: prophet, wise man, and interpreter. David Aune makes a thoughtful observation regarding the connection between revelation of mysteries and interpretation in his comment on Dan 2:30:

Three important terms, \(τό \) (mystery), \(πῶς \) (disclose, ‘reveal’) and \(μυστήριον \) (interpretation) occur together in Dan 2:30, where Daniel, after telling the king that the future has been revealed to him in a dream by ‘the revealer of mysteries [MT: \(κύριος \) \(πῶς \)]’ \(LXX: \) διὰ \(μυστήριον \) \(μυστήριου\), that is, God, explains (NRSV):

But as for me, this mystery [MT: \(κύριος \)] \(LXX: μυστήριον\] has not been revealed [MT: \(κύριος\)] \(LXX: \) \(μυστήριον\] to me because of any wisdom that I have more than any other living being, but in order that the interpretation [MT: \(κύριος \)] \(LXX: \) \(διὰ \) \(μυστήριον\] may be known to the king and that you may understand thoughts of your mind.

In addition, Aune observes that Daniel, unlike Joseph (Gen 40–41, where the patriarch asks the receivers to relate the dream in order to offer them his interpretation), “knows both the dream and its interpretation (Dan 2:17–45), a feature that suggests the close connection between charismatic exegesis and
prophecy." Aune also extends his observations to the Qumran method of interpretation:

The terms שֵׁלט (‘mystery’) and וּתָב (‘interpretation’) are used in similar ways in both Daniel and the Qumran pesharim, and it appears that there is more similarity between the methods of exegesis in Daniel and the pesharim than between the pesharim and later rabbinical midrashim.34

As Aune points out, the Teacher of Righteousness is also portrayed as a scribe who interprets the mysteries of the prophets. He is “the Priest [in whose heart] God set [understanding] that he might interpret (-hasib) all the words of His servants the prophets.” Likewise, “as for that which He said, That he who reads may read it speedily. interpreted (hasib) this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known (hasib) all the mysteries (шей) of His servants the Prophets.”16

The figure of the sage full of wisdom, scribe, and prophet matches Melito as well. It is well known, on the one hand, that Melito’s contemporaries saw him as a prophet. Eusebius lists him among the “great luminaries” of Asia, and portrays Melito as “the eunuch, who lived entirely in the Holy Spirit, who lies in Sardis, waiting for the visitation from heaven when he shall rise from the dead.” Jerome testifies that Tertullian, although obviously envying Melito’s elegant style and rhetorical talent, showed that many non-montanists viewed the Sardian as a prophet. “Tertullian, in the seven books which he wrote against the church in favor of Montanus, derides his [Melito’s] elegant and declamatory style, saying that he was thought of as a prophet by most of us Christians.”

It is also true that Melito’s text often betrays prophetic tones, especially in his anti-Jewish polemics where the reproaches he addresses to Israel are set in the form of a direct dialog between him and the people of Israel, in a similar way to the classic prophetic oracles:

What strange crime, Israel, have you committed! You dishonored him that honored you... What have you done, Israel!... And you killed your Lord at the great feast....O lawless Israel, what is this unprecedented crime you committed, thrusting your Lord among unprecedented sufferings, your Sovereign, who formed you, who made you... who tinted the light, who lit up the day, who divided off the darkness, who fixed the first marker, who hung the earth, who controlled the deep, who spread out the firmament, who arrayed the world, who fitted the stars in heaven, who lit up the luminaries, who made the angels in heaven, who established the thrones there, who formed man upon earth. It was he who chose you and guided you from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Isaac and Jacob and the twelve patriarchs. It was he who guided you into Egypt, and watched over you and there sustained you. It was he who lit your way with a pillar and sheltered you with a cloud, who cut the Red Sea and led you through and destroyed your enemy....30

This rhetorical form echoes, for example, well-known passages in Amos (“Listen, Israelites, to these words that the Lord addresses to you, to the whole nation which he brought up from Egypt [3:1]; “Listen, Israel, to these words, the dirge I raise over you [5:1].”) or Micah (“But I am full of strength, of justice and power, to declare to Jacob his crime, to Israel his sin. Listen to this leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel, who abhor what is right and pervert what is straight, building Zion with bloodshed, Jerusalem with iniquity [3:8–10].”).

One should recall as well Melito’s aforementioned claim to reveal the deepest mysteries of history and divine economy, namely the works of Christ through the Old and New Testaments. In fact, in his discursive scenario, Melito plays the role of the revealer of mysteries. At the same time, he is a revealer who undertakes this task through interpreting Scripture. Thus, Melito assumes the scriptural role of inspired interpreter.

Enoch and Melito as Interpreters, Decoders of Parables, and Revelers of the Truth

The method of revealing divine mysteries is undertaken through the exegetical process in which Melito decodes the parables and hidden meanings of the ancient scriptures. He is the inspired scribe in the process of a divine exegesis that takes place in the liturgical context of the Paschal celebration and follows immediately after the reading of Exod 12. The homily begins with the following clear statement, “The scripture from the Hebrew Exodus has been read and the words of the mystery have been plainly stated.”32 At first sight, the passage which follows this affirmation appears to be a short summary of the story of exodus. Instead of this, Melito explicates the thesis that the whole story is a mystery old and new, in which Christ was and still remains present (pages 1–10). He concludes in page eleven saying, “This is the mystery of the Pascha just as it is written in the law, as it has just now been read.” Melito continues afterwards, as he announced, by relating (διηγήσασθαι) the words of scripture and its mystery in which he emphasizes the presence of the Lord:

It is clear that your respect [the angel of death who slaughtered the first-born of Egypt] was won (δυναμεῖ) when you saw the mystery of the Lord occurring in the sheep, the life of the Lord in the slaughter of the lamb, the model (τύπον) of the Lord in the death of the sheep.33

At this point (page 35), he introduces technical exegetical terminology such as τύπον (type), τὸ λεγόμενον (that which is said/the text), τὸ γνώμενον (that
what is done (the event), παράβολή (parable/comparison), προκέτατον προκέτατον (project/preliminary sketch), and the following exegetical theory:

What is said (τό λεγόμενον) and done (γενόμενον) is nothing, beloved, without a comparison (παράβολή) and preliminary sketch (προκέτατον). Whatever is said and done finds its comparison—what is said a comparison, what is done a prefiguration (προεισέκοψε) in order that, just as what is done is demonstrated through the prefiguration, so also what is spoken (τό λεγόμενον) may be elucidated through the comparison.

Consequently, one may affirm that, according to Melito, the Old Testament is a set of parables. They have to be interpreted and their interpretation represents the linguistic expression of the mysterious, hidden things. These mysteries may either refer to already existing realities, such as the Son of Man hidden from the ages, or denote such future things as the end of the world and the reality of the world to come. Consequently, interpretation (ἐρμηνεία) follows the level of parables, which thus represent the mediatory language between interpretation and the hidden things (τα μυστήρια). Interpretation illuminates the old events and spoken words, which are the primary level of reality where God manifested and still manifests his divine actions and messages. To the contrary, the parable belongs to the domain of the interpreter, either angelic beings or humans such as Enoch, Ben Sira, Ezra, Paul, Melito, where God’s intervention might consist at most in the inspiration bestowed on the interpreter.

Accordingly, elucidating the parables and the intricate and obscure places of scripture defines the key preoccupation of the scribe. Since Melito’s primary activity consists of elucidating parables, his main function can be associated with scribal activity. Moreover, it is also worth noting that unlike Enoch, Ezra, and Baruch (who receive the interpretation through the mediation of an angel), Ben Sira, the Teacher of Righteousness, Paul, and Melito give their own interpretations. Their connection with the divine Wisdom, therefore, is unmediated.

However, any theory of parables harkens back to Prov 1:6, Ben Sira 39:2, and the Book of Parables from the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, and some of the most emblematic starting points for this intellectual phenomenon of the late antiquity are found there. As Nickelsburg observes, parables are deeply linked with the ideas of vision and transmission of divine, heavenly wisdom:

[The end of the first journey and much of the second journey focuses on what Enoch sees and how, upon his request for information, the visions are interpreted to him. The Book of Parables (chaps. 37-71), which as a whole recasts some of the traditions in chapters 1-36, also begins with repeated emphasis on Enoch’s receipt of wisdom.

End of the present, transmission of what he has learned through the words and parables he speaks.]

Moreover, one of the most important things of the parable theory consists of the spiritual purpose of the exegetical enterprise, namely the display and manifestation of the “truth” (πραξις or ἀλήθεια). The concept is already connected in the Hebrew Bible with another term of major importance for both Enochic and Melitiotan corpora, namely the “righteousness” (προσωπος or δικαιοσῦνη). The two terms seem to be strongly connected with Yahweh. In Gen 24:27, for instance, Isaac gives thanks to Yahweh for not taking away from him Yahweh’s προσωπος and πραξις. Many other passages such as Gen 32:10 or Ps 85:10, 86:15, 98:3, link the two terms together, and Exod 34:6 even states that Yahweh is bountiful in righteousness and truth. In other passages, Yahweh makes them manifest (2 Sam 2:6, 15:20). To a certain extent, the meanings of the two terms overlap, as one can see in the case of Exod 18:21 where the Hebrew πραξις προσωπος (literally “men of truth”) was rendered into Greek through ἀντίφασις δικαιοσύνης (“righteous men”). They are also frequently used in such expressions as “to walk in truth” (1 Kgs 2:4; 3:6; 2 Kgs 20:3) and “to walk in righteousness” (1 Kgs 3:6). While Ps 89:14 places truth along with mercy (προσωπος or ἀλήθεια) before the face (πραξις or προσωπος) of Yahweh, Ps 119:142 identifies the Torah and the truth, and Ps 119:151 the Ten Commandments and the truth. For another illustration, Dan 10:21 concocts the expression “in the Book of Truth” (πραξις προσωπος or ἐν ἄραμορφῃ ἀλήθειᾳ).

1 Enoch 91:4 also uses the expression to “walk in truth” and to “walk in righteousness,” while 1 Enoch 92:4 connects the concepts of “righteousness,” “truth,” and “light.” However, one of the most ancient parts of the Enochic corpus, the Book of the Watchers, associates with Enoch such titles as “scribe” (12:3; cf. 92:1), “scribe of righteousness” (12:4), and “scribe of truth” (15:1). Nickelsburg offers the following comments on the last title:

Enoch is addressed here as ἀνθρώπος ἀλήθειας καὶ γραμματέως τῆς ἀλήθειας. The parallel formulation in 12:4 is ἀγάματε τῆς δικαιοσύνης... The text in 12:4 almost certainly translates ἀγάματε τῆς ἀλήθειας. The Aram. noun ἀγάματε can mean either uprightness/righteousness or truth... and could therefore be legitimately translated in Greek either as δικαιοσὺνη or ἀλήθεια.\[42\]

Once the similarity of meaning between truth and righteousness has been emphasized, Nickelsburg proceeds to underline the theological significance of this title, “Enoch’s righteousness is relevant here because by virtue of it he was permitted to enter the divine presence.”

Similarly, the concept of truth (ἀλήθεια) is emblematic in Melito’s writing. In opposition to the concept of τύπος (the prefiguration or the preliminary
on earth. Furthermore, through this encounter, Christ carries “man to the
heights of heaven,” and shows him the Father. In Melito’s text, the Logos or
the Word utters his divine call in the following way:

Come then, all you families of men who are compounded with sins, and get for-giveness of sins. For I am your forgiveness, I am the Pascha of salvation, I am the lamb slain for you, I am your ransom, I am your life, I am your light, I am your salvation, I am your resurrection, I am your king. I will raise you up by my right hand; I am leading you up to the heights of heaven, there I will show you the Father from ages past.9

The significant aspect of this passage is that Melito reserves the apocalyptic
method of ascension for the eschatological time. Unlike Enoch and other
apocalyptic works, ascenso and visio Dei are not fragmentary moments of the
earthly life of a human being followed by the return to the earth, but represent
the promised, eschatological, final, and definitive ascension and vision of
God.

Concluding Remarks

Although sharing a similar epistemic paradigm with 1 Enoch and other
apocalyptic books, Melito’s standpoint reflects a special development of this
paradigm in Early Christianity. While the truth is to be found through the
scribal exegetical process of interpreting parables and revealing the divine and
heavenly mysteries, the access to those mysteries is no longer performed
exclusively through ascension, but through a complex process of initiation
into Christ’s mysteries with the expectation of the eschatological ascension
and vision of the Father. The event of Christ’s Incarnation represents the
descent of the source of revelation and wisdom, while ascension remains a
process particular to the eschaton. The process of internalization is, therefore,
inserted in the general scenario of the history of salvation, namely the eco-
nomic activity of Christ who descended to earth in order to raise again human
beings to heaven. While typology, in this context, represents a method of
interpreting the parables of scripture, revealing and generally mediating the
hidden truth and divine mysteries, the Christian interpreter is the scribe of a
new type of mysteries.

Melito’s type of interpretation appears to be an intellectual phenomenon
belonging to a certain period of history, namely the one in which begins with
the highest manifestation of the truth, the event of Incarnation.

The Incarnation plays, consequently, an important role in the Melitonian
epistemological scheme. On the one hand, it indicates the disclosure of the
highest mysteries of heaven (“the Christ above” [τὸν ἄνω Χριστόν], or “the
Jerusalem above” [τὴν ἄνω Ἑβραίαν]). On the other hand, the Incarnation
changes the location or the geography where the divine mysteries (at least
the pre-eschatological ones) are revealed. Instead of heaven, their location is
the earth. Moreover, the change in location of the divine mysteries entails a
change in the method of accessing them. In the post-incarnational context,
human beings do not have to ascend, but to become initiated into Christ’s
mysteries.

Melito, therefore, though employing a similar epistemic structure with the
apocalyptic one, places it in a context of mystery terminology. He is the
initiated interpreter able to discern the mysteries, extract the interpretation,
and make manifest the truth from the ancient parables:

[The model was made void, conceding its power to the reality (τῇ ἀληθείᾳ), and
the law was fulfilled, conceding its power to the gospel. In the same way as the model
was made void, conceding the image to the truly real (τῷ ἄνω ἀληθινῷ τῆς εἰκόνος παρὰ
δότοι), and the parable was fulfilled, being elucidated by the interpretation (ἐν πῶς ἡ
ἐρμηνείας φιλοτοιχισθείσης).] 54

Accessing the truth and the mystery actually leads to the encounter with
God, though this time not in an apocalyptic-ascensional way, but in an
internalized and mysterious manner. The exercise of typology, therefore,
represents the enterprise of revealing the highest mysteries of God, and leads
as well to the encounter with the real, active, and mysterious divine presence

sketch pertaining to the pre-incarnational period), the truth represents the full
manifestation of the divine mystery pertaining, according to Melito, to the
post-incarnational times:

For each belongs a proper season (or moment; καιρός), a proper time for the model
(τῷ τόπῳ), a proper time for the material (τῇ ἐστίν), a proper time for the reality
(τῇ ἀληθείᾳ). ...For the very salvation and reality (ἀληθείᾳ) of the Lord were pre-
figured in the people (ἐν τῷ λαῷ), and the decrees of the gospel were proclaimed in
advance by the law. The people (λαῷ) then was a model (τόπῳ) by way of preliminary
sketch, and the law (νόμῳ) was the writing of a parable (γραφὴ παράβολῆς), the gospel
is the recounting and fulfillment of the law, and the church is the repository of the
reality (τῇ ἀληθείᾳ). The model then was precious before the reality (πρὸ τῆς
ἀληθείας), and the parable (παράβολα) was marvelous before the interpretation (ἐν πῶς
ἐρμηνεύεται). 51
Melito, That New Enoch, the Divine Scribe: Typological Interpretation as Revelation in Peri Pascha

For a detailed analysis of the central biblical themes which received a typological interpretation in early Christianity (e.g. Adam, Noah, the flood, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, the exodus or the fall of Jericho), see Jean Danielou's classic Sacramentum Futurum: Études sur les origines de la typologie biblique (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950). According to his perspective, allegory was of Philonian inspiration and essentially Greek. However, for Henri de Lubac, on the basis of Gal 2:24, allegory was as Christian as typology. Moreover, for de Lubac “Origen’s allegorism is typological” and the distinction between typology and allegory seems to be analogous to that between theory and practice (“Typologie et allegorisme,” Revue des sciences religieuses 34 [1947]: 220–221). Other researchers such as Henri Crouzel, while seeing in allegory the method through which various terrestrial realities symbolize celestial entities, envision typology as the method through which one historical reality denotes another historical reality (especially an event from the New Testament or having Christ as subject); see Crouzel, Origen (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989) 80–81. However, Frances M. Young’s position, according to which typology is a form of allegory, has to be also underlined (see Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture [Cambridge University Press, 1997], 1980). Leonard Goppelt’s study Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) should also be mentioned for its investigation of the usage of the typological method in the Old and New Testaments, and the connection between typology and apocalypticism.

This kind of eschatology may be associated with the “charismatic esegesis” practiced in early Judaism and early Christianity, coined by H. L. Ginsberg, and analyzed for instance by Martin Hengel (The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period...
from Herod I until 70 CE [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989], 234–5), Gerhard Dautzenberg (Urchristliche Prophetie: Ihre Erforschung, ihre Voraussetzungen in Judaismus und ihre Struktur im ersten Judentum [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1975], 43–121, or David Aune, “Charismatic Exegetics in Early Judaism and Early Christianity,” in The New Testament Interpretation: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Introduction, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 126–50. For synonymous terms, see “inspired eschatological exposition” (E. E. Ellis, Prophecy and Hermeneutics in Early Christianity [Tübingen: Mohr, 1978], 26), or “spiritual exegesis,” “exégèse spirituelle” (L. Cerfaux, *L’exégèse de l’Ancien Testament par le Nouveau Testament*, in L’Ancien Testament et les Chrétiens, ed. P. Aubry (Paris: Cerf, 1951), p. 138. Aune even points out four key notes of the charismatic exegesis: (1) it is a commentary, (2) it is inspired, (3) it has an eschatological orientation, and (4) it was a prevalent type of prophecy during the Second Temple period (Aune, “Charismatic Exegetics,” 127). However, Aune also emphasizes some weak points of the phrase “charismatic exegesis,” it is vague and an “illuminating umbrella term used to designate a wide variety of claims that share the common conviction that the interpretation of sacred or revealed texts carries divine authority (Aune, “Charismatic Exegetics,” 129). Keeping in mind the detailed differences, these ideas are incarnated in such inspired persons as Enoch, Daniel, Ezra, Ben Sira, the Teacher of Righteousness, Paul, and Melito.

3 G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “Enoch as Scientist, Sage, and Prophet: Content, Function, and Authorship in 1 Enoch,” SBLSP 38 (1999): 203–230, esp. 221. Nickelsburg, while criticizing Hauck’s appreciation that Third Isaiah should be viewed as an “apocalyptic eschatology” (P. D. Hauck, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975], also affirms on p. 214: “Here is one of the problems of describing Third Isaiah as ‘apocalyptic eschatology.’ What Third Isaiah’s eschatology lacks is precisely the apocalypse, the revealed and interpreted vision that is the literary essence of Enoch’s account.”” For further bibliography on the Enoch tradition, some good starting points are, for example, J. VanderKam, Enoch, a Man for All Generations (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001); A. Orlov, *Enoch: Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2005); or L. T. Stuckenbruck, 1 Enoch 91–108 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).


7 See, for instance, 1 Enoch 14, Daniel 7, Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, Apocrypha of Zephaniah 8, 4 Baruch 10, 2 Enoch 22, Vita 25, *Ladder of Jacob* 2, Revelation 4, and Ascension of Isaiah.

8 Nickelsburg, “Enoch as Scientist,” p. 225. See also John Collins’ following consonant affirmation: “the figures to whom the major apocalypses are ascribed, Enoch, Daniel, Ezra, Baruch, are sages or scholars (‘The Sage in the Apocalyptic and Pseudepigraphic Literature,’ Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Literatur 97 (1994), 339–50).” It is worth mentioning that there are contemporary scholars who do not agree with a sharp distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic, such as Lester L. Grabbe. As Grabbe states: “From a form criticism perspective many of the old prophetic forms do tend to change or die out, and a new genre of apocalypses arises; however, apocalyptic is not by any means confined to formal apocalypses. In my opinion the sharp distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic is unjustified. For example, there is no reason why the prophetic book of Zechariah 1–8 cannot also be classified as an apocalypse. Indeed, I would rather see apocalyptic as a sub-genre of prophecy than a separate entity.” See L. L. Grabbe, *Poets, Scribes, or Preachers? The Reality of Prophecy in the Second Temple Period*, SBLSP 37 (1998): 524–45. Nonetheless, Grabbe does not offer any other criteria besides the social ones (e.g., theological, doctrinal, symbolic, cultural, or of any other nature), and confines the whole discussion on the border between prophetic and apocalyptic writings to “a social context and to social reality” (Grabbe, “Poets,” 528). He even advances the following principle: “This is enormously significant for purposes of our discussion: the prophetic writings and the apocalyptic and relating writings are all scribal works in their present form and thus present a similar problem when it comes to relating them to their social context” (Grabbe, “Poets,” p. 529).

12 Baynes, “Enoch,” 4: “As we progress from a survey of the earlier to the later examples of heavenly writing, however, we observe that it moves from the hands of angels or other heavenly beings [from the hands of Yahweh, e.g. Exod 32:22–33, Ps 69:28, Ps 139:16, Zach 5:1–5] particularly but not exclusively in apocryphal. This is not a surprising development since, as a rule, the figure of God recedes in this genre, and angels emerge as God’s primary agents.”


14 Ibid.


16 1 Enoch 16:3.

17 For analysis, see D. W. Suter, Tradition and Composition in the Parables of Enoch (SBDS 47; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979); cf. G. Boccaccini, ed., Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man Revisiting the Book of Parables (Grand Rapids, MI: Cambridge, UK; Eerdmans, 2007).

18 1 En 46:3.

19 According to James VanderKam, the two major sources of this theme in 1 Enoch are Second Isaiah (Isa 41:8, 9; 42:1; 43:10, 20; 44:1, 2; 45:41; 49:7) and Daniel 7, while the title “the anointed one” from 1 En 48:10 derives from Ps 2:2. Regarding the use of the eschatological, VanderKam supposes that this is the innovation of 1 Enoch, since “neither the servant nor the son of man has that function in Scripture,” although he agrees that the author of 1 Enoch has taken from Daniel 7 the image of the judgment scene present in 1 En 55:1–4; see J. VanderKam, “Biblical Interpretation in 1 Enoch and Jubilees,” in The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 96–125, esp. 116.


22 Bockmuehl, Revelation, p. 37. See, for example, 1 En. 48:6: “For this reason he was chosen and hidden in his presence before the world was created and forever. And the wisdom of the Lord of Spirits has revealed him to the holy and the righteous....”

23 Bockmuehl, Revelation, p. 38.


25 PP 2–3 [5–19].

26 PP 58 [405–8].

27 Cf. e.g., 1 Enoch 1:4–5: “The Great Holy One will come forth from his dwelling, and the eternal God will tread from thence upon Mount Sinai. He will appear with his army, he will appear with his mighty host from the heaven of heavens.”

28 PP 39.


32 Aune, “Charismatic Exegesis,” p. 132.

33 Ibid., p. 132.

34 Ibid., p. 132.


36 1QpHab 7:1–5 [Vermes, 481].


39 See PP 73–93. The passage is most likely part of the Jewish-Christian polemic of the time, see also some of his contemporary apologists who wrote treatises usually entitled Against the Jews, such as Apollinaris and Mithridates.

40 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations are from the Oxford Study Bible.


42 PP 1:1.

43 PP 33 [207–210].

44 See also PP 40 [262] “the law was the writing of a parable” (ὁ νόμος γραφή παραβολῆς). Yet, Clement of Alexandria will maintain, in his turn (see St. V. 25.1), the idea that the entire Scripture has been written in parables. Melito’s technique of typology may be seen as an important example and witness of the Christian theology of typological interpretation, the roots of which may be traced back to the Pauline letters, Justin, and Irenaeus. But Melito elaborates it in a methodical exegetical strategy and uses it in the context of a theory of mystery, which includes at least the following three key elements: (1) the exegetical structure type (pre-figuration)-archetype (revealed truth); (2) the Logos performs mysteries in both testaments, and the relationship between these mysteries is that between type and archetype; (3) Melito reveals these mysteries, the hidden works of the Logos.

45 See, for example, Sir 39:1–3: “How different it is with one who devotes himself to reflecting on the law of the Most High, who explores all the wisdom of the past and occupies himself with the study of prophecies! He preserves the sayings of famous and
penetrates the subtleties of parables. He explores the hidden meaning of proverbs and knows his way among enigmatic parables.”

As early as in Prov 1:6, there is reflection on the concepts of “parable” (παραβολή), “obscure word” (ἀκορώνιος), and “enigma” (μυστήριον). Later, Justin will define the obscure passages of the Bible as “mystery” (μυστήριον) or “symbol” (σύμβολον), and Christian theologians will interpret them mainly in a typological way. Justin, as an illustration, claims that prophecies describe future events through parables, mysteries, and symbols of events (ἐν παραβολαῖς δὲ μυστηρίοις ἢ συμβολαῖς ἔργοιν, Dial. 68.6), because the Holy Spirit, in general, manifests itself through parable and symbol (ἐν παραβολῇ δὲ καὶ συμβολῇ εἰρημένοις; Dial. 52.1). It appears that, according to the Justinianic and Irenaean theological visions, Christ’s coming was perceived as invoking major exegetical consequences. For Justin, Christ discovered the obscure words of the old holy writings (e.g., Dial. 76). For Irenaeus, the good news about Christ was hidden (συμβολαῖς) in prophecies and symbolized through types and parables (διὰ τῶν καὶ συμβολῶν ἐν μυστικῷ) which could be understood only at the time of their fulfillment in Christ (Adv. Haer. 4.26.1).

Nickelsburg, “Enoch” as Scientist,” p. 220.

Nickelsburg, I Enoch, p. 270. Cf. Nickelsburg, I Enoch, 411: “The nouns ‘truth’ (σεβάσμα) and ‘righteousness’ (σεβασμός) may well translate the same Aramaic word (נְשִׁי).”

Nickelsburg, I Enoch, 270.

PP 38 [241-4].

PP 39 [259]-41 [266].

PP 44 [289].

PP 45 [291].

PP 42 [271]-43 [274].


PP 102 [764].

PP 103.

A Medieval Armenian Scholion on the Catholic Epistles


4 From the Greek word ὁμιλείν meaning “comment.” In the remainder of this paper the term “scholion” will be used to translate the Classical Armenian title xmbqir meqmunun,


5 From a Latin word meaning “chain.” A catena is a series of comments on a specific biblical verse from the writings of the fathers of the Church connected to each other like a chain.

6 A Medieval Latin word referring to the notes inserted after the biblical text in the manuscripts to elaborate on the meaning of the text. In the later parts of the Middle Ages the term postilla was applied to running commentaries of the Bible where the text of the biblical verse or paragraph was printed first, followed by the explanations of the commentator.


12 Allian, Hayapatun, p. 370. The term wârapet means a theologian or teacher of the faith. It is an ecclesial rank in the Armenian Church synonymous to “doctor of faith.” See Hovhannesian, “A Glance at Monasticism in Armenia,” p. 84.


14 This is part of the title of the Commentary on the Gospel of Luke in the Matenadaran MS 5591.

15 For a detailed discussion of this date, see Hamsariq Oskean, Matenadaran K’hirumun嫩 (Vienna: Mecithariste, 1926), pp. 1-3.


17 Hayapatun, p. 370.

18 Jerusalem MS 855, Matenadaran MS 4006.

19 Jerusalem MS 149, Matenadaran MSS 2609, 6615, Venice MS 687, 740.

20 Matenadaran MS 1408.

21 See Jerusalem MS 365, and Matenadaran MSS 1132, 9480. Furthermore, in Matenadaran MS 1128, folio 192v, the 15th-century Armenian Church commentator of the Bible Yovhannes Kolotik had a copy of a commentary on the Book of Isaiah whose author he