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"Vir bellator omnes sectas contrarias veritati interficiet.

The anti-heretical polemics of Jerome of Stridon in his New Testament commentaries"

SUMMARY

The topic of this doctoral dissertation is the polemics of Jerome of Stridon against heresies present in his commentaries on the New Testament. The first part of the title of this work comes from the *expositio* of the Prince of Exegetes on Eph. 6:11. The ideal of *vir bellator*, developed by Jerome on the basis of this verse, who, through the use of the sword of the word of God, annihilates all factions opposing the recognized truth of the Great Church, perfectly corresponds to the *modus operandi* of the Stridonian himself towards heretics. In the refutation of various heterodox views, Jerome makes himself known as the titular *vir bellator*, who above all combines the eloquence of the *princeps exegetarum* with the tenacity of the *defensor fidei*, prepared by his education in rhetoric to engage in intellectual polemics.

The dissertation analyzes in detail the anti-heretical thought of the Monk of Bethlehem in his five commentaries on the New Testament: the four commentaries he wrote immediately after settling in the Holy Land, on the Pauline Epistles, that is, in *Ad Philemonem*, *Ad Galatas*, *Ad Ephesios* and *Ad Titum* (386-387), along with his exegetical commentary edited in 398, *In Matthaeum*. Establishing this scope of research on the polemic reflections of Jerome makes it possible to analyze his attitude to the heterodox theses of Origenism before and after the outbreak of the controversy surrounding the hypotheses of the Alexandrian in 393 in Palestine.

The work consists of seven chapters which can be divided into three thematic blocks. The first two chapters deal with issues that are essential in understanding the anti-heretical content of Jerome's New Testament commentaries. The first chapter presents the theological development of the Stridonian as an exegete of Holy Scripture and an apologist of orthodoxy, focusing on those events of his curriculum vitae which shed light on the content of Bethlehemite's polemical, anti-heretic exegesis. Because of the dates of the inception of the principal sources of this work as well as their content, this profiled presentation of Jerome essentially ends with the outbreak and course of the Origen controversy. In the second chapter of this work, the content of the analyzed New Testament commentaries has been discussed.

Chapters three and four, forming the second thematic block, show the general approach of the Bethlehemite to the phenomenon of heresy and of heretics themselves, without focusing on polemics on concrete heresies or heterodox movements. The third chapter shows possible

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information sources for Jerome on the topic of ancient heresies, his concept of the idea of *haeresis* and the semantic scope of that term, and also the Latin Father of the Church's understanding of the genesis of doctrinal error. Chapter four is dedicated to the ways and means by which the *vir bellator* combatted false teachers and their harmful points of view. It discusses the importance of the Holy Scriptures as the primary inspiration in fighting for the purity of the Christian faith, and at the same time as a weapon in polemics with heretics. It also shows the rhetorical tools and topoi which Jerome used to discredit his heretical adversaries.

The paper's third thematic block is a refutation of concrete heterodox movements. Chapter five is devoted to heresies about God, including Trinitarian and Christological errors; chapter six, to moral and ecclesial heresies; and chapter seven to the heterodox theses of Origenism and specifically to the teachings on preexistence of the soul, the spiritualization of the body after the resurrection, and on apocatastasis, a succession of worlds and metempsychosis. In his New Testament commentaries the Latin Doctor of the Church refutes the chronologically extensive and theologically diverse range of heterodox movements. The *defensor fidei* most often wields the blade of his polemics at the Gnostics, especially the Marcionites and Valentinians, Ebionites, Manichaeans, Arians and Anomoeans. He also assigns criticism to the doctrinal errors of Montanus and Novatian, Photinus, Apollinaris, Macedonius, and in the commentary *In Matthaeum*, he stands in opposition to Helvidius and the Origenists much more often than in his exegetical writings on the Pauline letters. The Monk of Bethlehem also sporadically came out against—almost forty years before the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy—anonymous heretics who proclaimed “two sons” in Christ, the Son of God and the son of man, who can be linked to representatives of Antiochian Christology. In individual passages, the *vir bellator* refutes the Trinitarian errors of Sabellius and Lactantius, polemicizes the heresy of the Encratites, whose representative he sees in the person of Julius Cassian, and also the teachings of millenarians. A particular case from among the heresies covered in the dissertation is the theses of Origenism. The research conducted shows that before the outbreak of the Origenist controversy, Jerome's stance on the hypotheses of the Alexandrian was equivocal, and accusations that the Prince of Exegetes was open to Origen's theological speculations are justified by the content of his commentaries on the Pauline letters. In his later commentary *In Matthaeum*, however, the Bethlehemite makes himself known as a definite opponent of Origenism.

Key words: Jerome of Stridon, patristic exegesis, early Christian heresies, gnosticism, Marcion, Valentinus, Encratism, Ebionism, Montanism, Manichaeism, Novatianism, Arianism, Photinus, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Helvidius, Origen, Origenism.

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