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***THECLA'S HYMN (SYMP. 285-292) – DID METHODIUS
OF OLYMPUS IMITATE PLATO?***

SUMMARY: In this article the author analyses the literary sources of Thecla's hymn from Methodius of Olympus' Symposium. It is obvious that Methodius took over his concept of the treaty on chastity from Plato's Symposium, but in the end of the work, or Thecla's Hymn, is closer to Origen, from whom he borrowed the concept of mystical marriage of the Church and of the soul. In the hymn there are some common motifs with Song of Songs, especially with regard to the allegorical interpretation of love. The hymn is not Platonic, but it is a poetic summary of philosophical discussion, and praise and glory to Christ.

KEYWORDS: Methodius of Olympus, Thecla's hymn, mystical marriage, Song of Songs, epithalamium

Thecla's hymn is the culmination of a banquet – the meeting of ten virgins, described in Methodius' of Olympus treatise on chastity, entitled in Greek Συμπόσιον τῶν δέκα παρθένων. The very title of the work clearly indicates Platonic reminiscences on the one hand, and on the other hand, the number and characters of ten virgins have obvious associations with Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25:1-13). So, from the very beginning of the treatise we are dealing with combining both traditions – the Classical Greek and Christian one, which in the era of Methodius was already quite widespread in literature, philosophy, and theology. One of the first writers, who starts this long process of inculturation of Hellenism and Christianity was Justin

Martyr, then Clement of Alexandria and then Origen, although the latter contributed more to the introduction of innovative methods in the exegesis of the Old Testament and the approximation of the Jewish and Christian culture.

The conscious building of his treatise on chastity on the model of one of the most beautiful of Plato's dialogues, the dialogue about love, has aroused keen interest among researchers for a long time – they have tried to figure out how original Methodius is, how much he is dependent on Plato, and whether his work is an example of emulation, especially typical for the writers of Rome, or a simple imitation or merely a transfer of the literary form to Christian content. Anyway, the use of Plato is not limited to the motif of *symposium*, the dependence on this work lies on the imitation of the language and style, a structural frame and form, and perhaps above all, the subject – an ideal love.¹

Maria Benedetta Zorzi carries out studies on linguistic and theological connections of Methodius with Plato's *Symposium* and makes an interesting reinterpretation of the concepts: the Platonic heavenly *eros* becomes ἀγάπη in the author of the Olympus – and therefore is not negated (Zorzi 2003: 116). The researcher focuses on vocabulary, without separating the *Thecla's Hymn* from the rest of the treatise, as her study does not relate to the literary genre.

Calogero Riggi notes that a form of dramatic dialogue according to the Platonic model echoes in the Methodius' work (Riggi 1976: 63). Although his division of the treatise on the dramatic acts is interesting, yet the significance of *Thecla's hymn* is completely not underlined herein – neither its content nor form, only that it composes the final catharsis together with the statements of the three heroines (Riggi 1976: 76).

Kazimierz Korus pointed out yet another possibility of the use of Plato by Methodius, namely, through Plutarch's works, especially his dialogue *On love*. Although, as he notes, quotes and parallel thoughts of the Christian writer with those of Plutarch are rare (Korus 2008: 24), however, prove about the knowledge of some writings of the author of Chaeronea. It is interesting to compare these three authors: Plato, Plutarch and Methodius and their common pursuit of the ideal

¹ In Methodius' *Symposium* there are also reminiscent of *Phaedrus*, the *Republic*, *Phaedo* (450B) and – in the Thecla's speech – *Timaeos* (22B).

of the different faces of love – homosexual, marital and virginal (Korus 2008: 14).

Alexander Bril compares the sympotic form in both the authors and he accuses the Christian author of ignorance and lack of literary talent, as the sympotic genre is closely associated with a particular social convention: in the classical antiquity a *symposium* is a meeting of the Greek male aristocracy, where predominantly sex and drinking was being spoken about – the *Eros* is a typical subject of the *logos sympotikos* (Bril 2005: 290). The banquet of Plato's work does not fully reflect the real *symposium* either, but this is a literarily processed relation of the meeting that is primarily characterized by intellectual ethos. Such elements are preserved by Plato as ritual feasts, libations, singing hymns, drinking (also an autothematic discussion of the principles of good drinking), yet omitted *utensilia*: the details of furniture, decorations are skipped or only subtly marked, some entertainment and sympotic customs are missed as well – “with the consent” of the present people.² One of the main pastimes of banquets – sexual games, is limited to the topic of conversation in Plato's work.

Methodius' treatise is the absolute negation of these customs: the women are meeting to talk about sexual abstinence (chastity is the main subject of the discourse), and drinking wine is actually symbolic (it is not in the foreground in any case), but – as Bril emphasizes – *παράκοπα συμποτικά* are preserved by Methodius: the aristocratic status of the participants, using the services of slaves, following the order of speeches or praises and – singing the hymn (Bril 2005: 284). After all, Bril describes the whole form and sympotic character in the Methodius' work as aberrations (Bril 2005: 297) – but I would call these changes transformations rather, because I think there are not accidental but deliberately introduced modulations being the result of the different cultures. The transformations, except for the above-mentioned (women and sexual abstinence), also apply to such elements as scenery – the classical *σμπόσιον* was typically urban, here we have a garden behind the city and meeting in the shade of a tree. The next: the negation of the *ἔρος*³ and *κάλλος* and the suggestion that real beauty is

² Bril 2005: 284: “Other performers, and the recitation of lyric poetry”.

³ Is it really negation of the *eros* – see above (Zorzi 2003).

spiritual; the composition of the work – a sequence of voiced praises follows here in the form of catechizes, without interludes or digressions, as in Plato; characteristics of heroes – uniform, without individualized personalities.⁴

The second kind of reminiscences in the Methodius' *Symposium* is the Holy Bible, both the Old and the New Testament. Like most of the early Christian writers, Methodius treats the Scripture as the main point of reference, he often explains Jesus' words by examples of the Old Testament, extensive fragments are woven with biblical quotations.⁵ The Gospel parable conveys the idea of the Bridegroom and the Bride in the treatise on chastity, as well as it is a structural frame that organizes the content, in a different scope than those borrowed from Plato – here it is about the precisely specified number of participants of the banquet (ten) and the meeting of the girls preparing for the encounter with Christ by living their lives in purity.

Methodius, the disciple of Origen, dependent upon him in many cases (although he fought his spiritualism), in the *Symposium* also uses the allegorical method of interpreting the Scripture. The researchers agree that in exegesis, mysticism and terminology Methodius is reliant on Origen: Emanuela Prinzivalii shows that Methodius was the first one to use Origenian exegesis, holding “il discorso esegetico intorno ad un unico tema predeterminato” (Prinzivalii 1985: 12). Josep Montserrat-Torrents examines the ecclesiological aspect of the *Symposium*, comparing it with the relevant passages of Origen and comes to the conclusion that Methodius follows the master of Alexandria only in the field of terminology: “Metodio sigue las huellas de Origenes tanto en el contenido como en la terminologia” (Montserrat-Torrents 1986: 100). Zorzi draws more attention to the theological than methodological aspect, saying that dependence on Origen concerns the idea of monastic

⁴ Most scholars claim that the composition of speeches is a schematic, and discussions are devoid of drama and true beauty of the Platonic dialogue (Korus 2008: 24).

⁵ Methodius' *Symposium* in its mosaic pattern of genre shall be introduced into the tradition of the sympotic genre represented by Athenaeus of Naucratis and his *Deipnosophistae*, where the revelers cite lots of comedy, tragedy, etc. Brill points out, however, that the influence of nine sympotic works, which have arisen over the centuries from Plato to Methodius, is to be detected in Methodius' *Symposium*, with the exception of Plato's one (Brill 2005: 280).

and celibate, and she stresses that in the philological prospect Methodius is dependent on Plato (Zorzi 2006: 47).

The above review shows that there are many works devoted to the influences of Plato, Origen, the writings of the Old and New Testament on Methodius' *Symposium* as a complete work, but there is no research on *Thecla's hymn* and its links with the early Christian literature.⁶ The purpose of my article is to identify the literary sources of the hymn, which can be treated as an autonomous text, even if in some way it forms a self-contained whole with the rest of the treatise. I would like to consider whether the hymn is also inspired by Plato to such an extent as the remaining parts of the *Symposium*, or perhaps by another pagan or Christian work.

The early Christian poetry does not actually exist on its own, that is, we do not have any collection of hymns or liturgical songs, we do not know any author of the first centuries of Christianity either, who could be called a strictly religious poet, but there are a lot of pieces of religious poetry that came to the liturgy – so, where did these come from? The uniqueness of this phenomenon lies in the fact that these songs are always parts of some other larger work, and being on the one hand separate works in terms of form and quite often of content, on the other hand, they are closely linked with the rest of the work that they are a part of. So the paradox lies in the autonomy and connectivity with the context at the same time. And to briefly look at the phenomenon of early Christian literature, one may just mention the parts of the Gospel, like *Magnificat* or *Benedictus*, some passages of St. Paul's epistles, for example, 1 Cor 1:13, Eph 1:3-11 and Phil 2:6-11, a large excerpt can be found in the *I Clement* (59-61), a very short passage just a few verses long in the *Epistle to the Ephesians* by Ignatius' of Antioch. So is it also in the case of *Didache* ("Teaching of Twelve Apostles"), which contains the *Eucharistic Song* possessing hymnic features.⁷

Methodius places his hymn at the end of the *Symposium* – so does Clement of Alexandria at the end of the *Educator*,⁸ but the custom of

⁶ The only exception is a very good commentary of Pellegrino 1958.

⁷ I took up these questions in two articles: Heszen 2007; Heszen 2009.

⁸ Pellegrino 1958: 39: "Si è pensato che l'idea di chiudere il *Simposio* con un inno sia venuta a Metodio da Clemente Alessandrino, il quale terminava il *Pedagogo* con l'inno cantato dal coro dei fanciulli".

including hymns in some writings dates back, as I showed, to the beginnings of Christian literature. Note that although the first collections of the hymns were created in the fourth century,⁹ this practice persisted much longer: the Byzantine drama *Christus patiens* attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus, but dating back to the twelfth century also ends with a hymn (vv. 2532-2604).

The hymn in Methodius' treatise is being sung by one of the girls giving the praises of chastity. She was – Thecla – awarded a wreath by Arete for the most beautiful speech:

Ἦμας δὲ διαρκῶς ἀγωνισαμένας τῷ λόγῳ αὐτήκοος γενομένη πάσας ἀποφαίνομαι νικᾶν καὶ στέφω, Θέκλαν δὲ τῷ μείζονι στεφάνῳ καὶ δασυτέρῳ ὡς πρώτην ὑμῶν καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστερον ἐκλάμψασαν (*Symp.* 284)¹⁰.

Right after that there is a description of arranging the anthem by Arete, a moment important for the understanding of the situation in which the hymn was given. There is a description of the scenery, and it is clearly stated who, when and how to sing a hymn. There is also an answer to the question of how to deliver the hymn, what is the fundamental in this genre, namely, theatricality – performance and happening in the extratextual reality:

(Θεοπάτρα ἔφη) ταῦτα οὖν εἰποῦσαν κελεῦσαι πάσας ἀναστῆναι τὴν Ἄρετὴν καὶ στάσας ὑπὸ τὴν ἄγνον εὐχαριστήριον πρεπόντως ὕμνον ἀναπέμψαι τῷ κυρίῳ, ἐξάρχειν δὲ τὴν Θέκλαν καὶ προῦφηγεῖσθαι. Ὡς οὖν ἀνέστησαν, τὴν Θέκλαν μέσσην μὲν τῶν παρθένων ἔφη, ἐκ δέξιων τῆς Ἄρετῆς στάσαν κοσμίως ψάλλειν, τὰς δὲ λοιπὰς ἐν κύκλῳ καθάπερ ἐν χοροῦ στήματι συστάσας ὑπακούειν αὐτῇ (*Symp.* 284).

I would like to point out a few things that I think are important in this description: the garden, where the girls are performing, is modeled on Eden (Zorzi 2003: 109); the willow, which the virgins are standing under, is a symbol of purity¹¹; from the words “Thecla started singing and she led the song” we know who is the coryphaeus; there is

⁹ For example, Gregory of Nazianzus or Synesius of Cyrene.

¹⁰ Quotations according to the edition Sch 95 – see *References – Sources*.

¹¹ Note the play on words: στάσας ὑπὸ τὴν ἄγνον – and ἀγνεία.

information about the choir as well: “other virgins surrounding her like a chorus accompanied her” – so the hymn has clearly performative nature, what as Furley writes, is the feature of the hymn as a religious work (Furley 1995: 33).

The hymn is clearly announced by some kind of stage directions (*didaskalia*) in the text: narration in prose – the relation of the banquet turns into poetry, so that from the point of view of the theory of literature, there is a separate genological entity. And yet, it can be said that this hymn “fits” here very well – the sympotic genre provides for the singing of hymns, the rhetorical contests and some competitions (*agones*),¹² so it is not surprising that one of the characters having won the *agon*, sings a hymn of praise. The hymn, however, is not the usual “entertainment” or interlude, typical of the *symposium*, because of the participants of the banquet taking part in this singing – there are not slaves or musicians and flute-girls. In this respect, *Thecla's hymn* is a part of the feast as a discourse on a particular topic, its continuation in a poetic way and summary of the whole work (Stanula 1980: 25, n. 92).

Does the hymn render the nature of its performer, Thecla? In Methodius' *Symposium* there is no special individualization of heroes, but might the hymn of this kind have indeed been delivered by each of virgins participating in the banquet? According to the Asian tradition, Saint Thecla, a disciple of the Apostle Paul, died as a martyr, or she had won the “crown” of glory – so, the wreath in *Symposium* refers to this symbol, if we assume that Thecla in Methodius is modeled on the heroine of the apocrypha, or even she is her herself.¹³ The prize for legendary Thecla for her virtue was the martyrdom, for Thecla of the *Symposium* – the laurel of victory for the most beautiful speech, what may be anticipation of her future death. The hymn is so arranged that everything here harmonizes with each other: it is being delivered by the person, who has won; her award joins the tradition of St. Thecla “crowned” with martyrdom; the content of the hymn reflects Thecla's speech, especially in the ecclesiological aspect – the subject of the spousal union of Christ with the Church (Montserrat-Torrents 1986:

¹² See: Węcowski 2011.

¹³ The historical realities are not clearly defined in Methodius' treaty.

89) and the mystical wedding is developed in speech VIII, 4-9 of the *Symposium*.

For comparison, I would like to cite some examples of similar literary actions in the earlier texts, like *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*, which were quoted by the evangelist as prayers of the people of the story. The fragments are distinct works – songs, underlined by *didascalía*, what explicitly separates those ones from the rest of text: “And Mary said...”, “Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied...”, “Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying...”.¹⁴ Each of these statements is individualized, matched to personality and the social function of these characters – Mary gives a very personal prayer, the prayer of a young girl who is praying with the Psalms, Zechariah sings as the priest of the temple, Simeon as a prophet.

Clement of Alexandria, after having written three extensive books of his treatise in prose, closes it with a poetic passage, completely distinct from the rest of the work from the formal point: the *Hymn to Christ Saviour*. After the argumentation on the Logos-Educator of the universe and after the prayer to Him, the author encourages readers – followers of Christ – to common singing the anthem for the greater glory of God. The concept of the treatise is based on the identification of Christ as an educator, and His followers – children, and just they are the ones to sing the final hymn. So, the performers of the song are the link or bind with what is contained in the books that precede the hymn to Christ.

As it is showed above, a method of involving a hymn into some bigger work is similar in many cases – introduced by means of simple *didaskalia* song which changes the genre of the work (prose into poetry), but a figure that this hymn presents, on the one hand expresses the ideas contained in the whole work, on the other hand, as it befits a poem, expresses his personal feelings or thoughts. From the point of view of poetics, it is a variety of literary and embellishment, but also it has a religious dimension – all the songs discussed here belong to the writings related to faith and religion, whether canonical Gospels, or a philosophical dissertation by Clement or treatise by Methodius – so, the hymns included in the compositions could be an attempt

¹⁴ The translation from <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage>, accessed 28.02.2016.

to glorify God by the author, to honor and praise, all what is prayer, except that here it is uttered by the mouth of the characters of works in question.

Thecla's hymn is sometimes described as an *epithalamium* (Pellegriano 1958: 44-46; Quasten, Plumpe 1958: 151ff.; Musurillo, Debisdour 1963: 340; Riggi 1976: 76), because it is constructed on the theme of marriage to Christ: marriage to the Church and marriage to an individual person living in chastity. I would like to focus on references and the literary source of this type of metaphor – a mystical concept of wedding. Methodius' virginal symposiasts are Brides of Christ, what is mentioned several times in the text of the *Symposium* (Clark 2008: 14-15), and the hymn as a whole expresses this idea, which is immediately evident in the introductory refrain:

Ἀγνεύω σοι καὶ λαμπάδας φαισφόρους
κρατοῦσα, νυμφίε, ὑπαντάνω σοι.

The marriage of the Church to Christ and the mystical union of the soul with the Logos is mentioned in the Talia's and Thecla's discourses (chap. III, 8-9; VIII 4-9), what corresponds to stanzas 7, 20 and 23 of *Thecla's hymn*. The subject of the soul betrothed to the Lord is taken in the Agatha's speech (chap. VI, 1-3), next continued in a poetic form of the hymn in strophes 2-5 and 10. There are here the two levels of the metaphor: the Church as the bride and the soul as the bride.¹⁵ This interpretation of the spousal relationship with Christ has its source in the allegorical method of Origen, the motif of mystical marriage is naturally found in the *Song of Songs*,¹⁶ what Origen comments as follows:

Libellus hic epithalamii habens speciem dramatis in modum conscribitur [...]. Spiritualis vero intelligentia, secundum hoc nihilominus quod in

¹⁵ This metaphor is derived from the tradition of the New Testament: Matt 25:1-13; Eph 5:22-33. Compare Montserrat-Torrents 1986: 91: "Señalemos en primer lugar la introducción del término «esposa» atribuido a la Iglesia. Es un tema tradicional derivado del abundante tratamiento escriturístico de las imágenes epitalámicas. Metodius une las corrientes tradicionales del alma-esposa y de la Iglesia-esposa". The use of metaphor of "Bridegroom", see Clark 2004: 172-174.

¹⁶ As regards the influence of *Song of Songs* on the *Symposium*, as the second, next to Plato, inspiration on Methodius, see Pellegrino 1958: 20, 69, 81, 107; Zorzi 2003: 126.

praefatione signavimus, vel de ecclesia ad Christum sub sponsae vel sponsi titulo vel de animae cum Verbo Dei coniunctione dirigitur (I, 1, 1-2).¹⁷

One might have assumed this method and looked at *Thecla's hymn* with so many layers, as it is proposed by Origen regarding the *Song of Songs*. In the historical sense the hymn can be understood as a specific song of praise sung during some feast, at which participants express their love and willingness to sacrifice themselves to Christ (ἀγνεύω σοι, νουμφίε) through their celibate lives. Historically speaking, Methodius' times were an era where an organized ascetic life was just beginning and on the basis of his work exactly one may think that some form of *koinos bios*, which in later centuries took the form of life in the monasteries had already existed in its germs in the 2nd/3rd century AD. Thus, if we consider Methodius' *Symposium* as a description of real events, as there is in Plato's one and which the example Christian author follows of,¹⁸ the hymn would be the crowning achievement of such considerations on chastity, a kind of vows to live in asceticism put in a poetical way. The next sense of the reading the text, according to Origen, is the internal one:

Interior vero intellectus videamus si hoc modo poterit competenter aptari. Ecclesia sit desiderans Christo coniungi; ecclesiam autem coetum omnium adverte sanctorum (I, 1, 5).

And the third, the allegorical sense:

Tertio vero expositionis loco introducamus animam, cuius omne studium sit coniungi et consociari Verbo Dei et intra mysteria sapientiae eius ac scientiae veluti sponsi caelestis thalamos intrare (I, 1, 9).

How clear the inspiration by Origen's allegorizing is shows the fact that some stanzas of *Thecla's Hymn* could be almost illustrations of the comment to the *Song of Songs*:

Τὴν σὴν, μάκαρ, γαμήλιον ποθοῦντες ἀμέραν
 ἰδεῖν, ὅσους ἄνωθεν αὐτὸς ἀγγέλων ἀναξ
 κέκληκας, ἦκασιν μέγιστα δῶρά σοι, λόγε,
 φέροντες ἀσπίλοις στολαῖς. (19)

¹⁷ Quotations according to the edition SCh 375 – see *References – Sources*.

¹⁸ Compare the introductory dialogue of Eubulion and Gregorion.

Michele Pellegrino repeatedly points out that Methodius refers to the *Song of Songs*,¹⁹ but to be precise, it is the reference *via* Origen, through his commentary on the *Canticles* and his interpretation of the work. Methodius takes his conception of the soul – the Bride of Christ and the Church – the Bride of Christ, which the Alexandrian master developed in his commentary (Zorzi 2003: 115), and he recognizes this allegoric method in a poetic way.

A common imaging method to both the works (*Thecla's hymn* and *Song of Songs*) is, in general, typical for wedding songs: a room for spouses, gifts, feast and cups full of nectar: κρατήρες ἀδυπληθές νέκταρος (10). The procession of peers is also a similar motif: ὁμόστολοι ἴμέλπουσαι σὸν γάμον (7). But a sophisticated eroticism of the *Song* disappears in Methodius – that one is full of exclamations expressing the desire to kiss, touch, there are beautiful comparisons of type:

for your love is more delightful than wine.

[...]

your name is like perfume poured out (1, 2-3).²⁰

In Methodius' hymn (as in all *Symposium*) chastity emphasized with “whiteness of robes”: λευκάϊσιν ἐν στολαῖς (1), ἀσπίλοις ἐν εἶμασιν (3), the sexual abstinence and the desire for grace come to the fore. Eroticism is almost negated and rejected:

[...] ἐκφυγοῦσα καὶ βίου τρυφήν ἀδονᾶς τ' ἔρωτα (2);

Γάμων λιποῦσα θνητα λέκτρα καὶ δόμον,

ἄναξ, δια σε πολύχρυσον [...] (3)

The subtle erotic allusions occur only in strophes describing the exempla of chastity and fidelity – that mention Joseph (and Potiphar's wife), Judith (and Holofernes), Susan (and old men), but here eroticism has by no means such a positive tone as in the *Song of Songs*, where it is a metaphor of the deepest love.

¹⁹ See note 16.

²⁰ The translation from <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Song%20of%20Songs%201> (31.03.2015).

So, what are the literary sources of *Thecla's hymn*? Montserrat-Torrents writes about Thecla's speech as the most Platonic of all parts of the dialogue²¹, but it should be noted that the hymn sung by her, even though some of the issues are common with her speech, is not Platonic. In Plato's *Symposium* there is no equivalent of a hymn of this kind – a little prayer or even mini-hymns, the praise of Eros have not taken after all such a dimension (and a size) as *Thecla's hymn*. Although Methodius' *Symposium* is a reflection of Plato, an attempt of imitation of him, more or less successful, *Thecla's hymn* being its part is entirely original in this respect. I do not agree with Elizabeth Clark saying about the influence of Plato's erotic imagery on the entire *Symposium*, including the final hymn (Clark 2008: 15, n. 85) – it seems to me, however, that the *Song of Songs* and Origenian method of allegory are more important. Methodius' *Symposium* – according to Zorzi – is a reinterpretation of Platonic eros (Zorzi 2003: 102ff.), it is also a reinterpretation of “banquet” in general, as a cultural phenomenon. The hymn, the least Platonic element, is based on the concept of mystical marriage, is the culmination of discussions or rather praises of purity, which have been carried out earlier. It is somehow an essence of the taken subject on chastity (παρθένια), which is dedicated to the Bridegroom-Christ.

As the first space of literary references one ought to consider the early Christian literature, from the New Testament, by the Apostolic Fathers and Clement of Alexandria as the main model of ending a philosophical treatise with a poetic passage. Methodius chose a motif of marriage from the tradition of the Old and New Testament: the parable about wise and foolish virgins and wedding song or the *Song of Songs*. The Gospel parable, which is the frame of the all treatise (ten participants of the banquet, the waiting for the Bridegroom or the second coming of the Lord), in *Thecla's hymn* is evoked in strophes no. 8 and 9. The hymn and the *Song of Songs* with its allegorical interpretation made by Origen share the character of a wedding song and the idea of the Bride and Bridegroom, what is especially shown in strophes no. 7 and 10. From the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and Clement of Alexandria, he took a model of a work different in terms of genre to be

²¹ Montserrat-Torrents 1986: 94: “Los tres primeros párrafos del discurso de Tecla son uno de los lugares más genuinamente platónicos de toda la obra de Metodio”.

woven into the treatise (like it has been shown above, this technique is derived from the Gospel too).

In relation to the whole work, which is the *Symposium*, the hymn is a poetic summary of philosophical discussion, but above all, it is the final prayer of praise and glory to Christ. *Thecla's Hymn* is approximate to the adoration hymns of the New Testament and to the ending of *Paedagogus*, but in very little degree to the minor forms of prayer in some of the dialogues of Plato. Although the *Symposium* as a whole refers to Plato in such an extent, I would like to emphasize that in *Thecla's hymn* there is no allusion to or inspiration by, whether in form or content, the Athenian philosopher and his dialogue about love.

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