
CHARALAMBOS DENDRINOS (ed.), *Manuelis II Imperatoris Opera Theologica. De processione Spiritus Sancti, De ordine in Trinitate, Epistula ad Alexium Iagoupem* (Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 71). Turnhout: Brepols 2022. cliv+435 pp. – ISBN 978-2-503-52807-6

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This critical edition of Manuel II Palaiologos' theological oeuvre offers three texts that illuminate a key process in late Byzantine intellectual history: scholarly interactions with the West. The three works, *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, *On the Order in the Trinity*, and the *Letter to Lord Alexios Iagoupes*, reflect the ongoing debates surrounding the Trinitarian doctrine, particularly the notion of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. The texts are situated within the turbulent context of the early fifteenth century, a period characterized by Byzantine political weakness and mounting external pressures from the Latins and the Ottomans alike. The editor CHARALAMBOS DENDRINOS has made a significant contribution to the study of one of the few Byzantine emperors who demonstrated dedication to theological studies.

With this edition, which offers a comprehensive picture of his theological thinking, the intellectual legacy of Manuel II Palaiologos becomes more accessible to students and scholars. A prolific author of rhetorical, ethical, political, and religious works, Manuel penned texts of varying extent and complexity that addressed the debates of his time. Historians have explored these texts as valuable repositories of hidden information revealing tense relations with both domestic factions and foreign powers. Manuel's preoccupation with the theological debates between Eastern and Western Christianity has not escaped scholarly attention, since this emperor constantly integrated theological views into his exercise of power. Whereas in his homilies he seemed to reflect a priestly office, in the more theoretical compositions, he positioned himself as a defender of the Orthodox faith. During his forced sojourn in the Ottoman camp in the early 1390s as vassal of Sultan Bayezid, Manuel conducted a series of conversations with an Ottoman religious scholar (*müderres*) on the differences between Christianity and Islam. Thereafter, he recorded these conversations in his *Dialogues with a Muslim* (ed. CHRISTIAN FÖRSTEL, 1993), which included a range

of aspects of Christian apologetics: the authority of the Scriptures, the differences between Moses and Muhammad, the idea of redemption, the Incarnation, or the veneration of icons. His three further theological works, included in this edition, show Manuel's familiarity with the subtle arguments about Trinitarian theology, a relevant topic in Byzantine intellectual circles, especially at a time when calls for a rapprochement with the Latin West increased.

The volume consists of a detailed historical and philological introduction followed by the edition proper. A substantial critical apparatus together with detailed indexes helps the reader assess the range of sources employed and understand the different stages in the production of the texts. As the editor notes, Manuel's treatment of the main theological topic, the procession of the Holy Spirit (περὶ τῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐκπορεύσεως) has several noteworthy features: use of rhetorical devices of argumentation, as well as sophisticated engagement with both Greek patristic sources and contemporary theology, either Byzantine or Latin. Manuel constantly affirms the Orthodox position that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, by criticizing Latin arguments for the Filioque. As DENDRINOS argues, the author adopted a nuanced approach, distinct from other contemporary treatises on the same topic, especially in terms of his critical approach to syllogistic formulations. His cautionary remarks about the misuse of logic in theology reflected debates in Byzantine intellectual circles, influenced by the Hesychastic movement, about the proper relationship between faith and reason.

As DENDRINOS suggests throughout the volume, beyond the significance for the history of late Byzantine theology, all three texts echo the broader religious context of the late Middle Ages and offer a window into the intellectual culture of the late Byzantine court. References to various monastic orders (such as the Dominican and Franciscan friars) in geographical regions other than Byzantium hint at the emperor's awareness of the intricacies of the religious landscape of the time. Further evidence points to the author's alignment with the intellectual currents of his time. Manuel uses the sociolect typical of late Byzantine scholarly writing, with complex syntax and Atticizing vocabulary. In terms of structure, the most extensive of the compositions, the treatise *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, employs the form of chapters, a choice that reflects similar usage in many other contemporary texts with a moral, religious, or political thrust. In terms of contents, Manuel's adoption of philosophical concepts, evident in his discussion of wisdom and will in relation to the Trinity, points to a reliance in

Byzantine theological discourse on classical learning, in particular on Plato and Aristotle.

On the Order in the Trinity and the *Letter to Lord Alexios Iagoupes* are briefer texts. The former, written shortly after the main treatise, *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, of which it was considered a part, deals with similar issues but in a condensed manner. DENDRINOS suggests that it was influenced by the *Twenty-Two Orations on the Trinity* written around the same time by a contemporary preacher, Joseph Bryennios. The other text, the *Letter to Alexios Iagoupes*, which DENDRINOS dates to 1396, was actually addressed to a supporter of the Latins or a Catholic convert – in all likelihood Manuel Kalekas. The letter is important because of Manuel's detailing of his views on the study of theology and the relation between church and state.

By far the most extensive piece in the volume, *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, was composed in response to a tract presented by an anonymous Latin theologian during the emperor's stay in Paris (1400–1402). It reflects the ongoing theological debates between the Byzantine Orthodox and Latin Catholic churches. The largest part of the treatise was written in Paris and later revised by Manuel himself after his return to Constantinople. In dating the text, DENDRINOS considers a letter that Manuel sent to Demetrius Chrysoloras about his ongoing tasks (letter 43, ed. GEORGE DENNIS). The editor convincingly re-dates this epistolary exchange between autumn 1403 and autumn 1407, as it mentions state matters preventing Manuel from completing the composition. The composition thus coincides with Manuel's diplomatic efforts in Western Europe, seeking support against Ottoman threats.

The treatise is divided into 156 chapters, each dealing with a theological explanation leading to the refutation of the main Latin argument on the dual procession of the Holy Spirit. DENDRINOS points to the brief preface by Manuel, followed by a summary in Greek of the original Latin tract (λατινιστὶ) which however has not been traced. The author explains that the work is not directed against the Latins, but rather stands as a defense (ἀπολογία) against certain accusations or arguments. Manuel quotes extensively from the Latin text, including arguments supporting the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.

As for the theological content, Manuel discusses fundamental principles concerning scriptural, patristic, and conciliar authority on doctrinal matters. He distinguishes the proper approach to theology, emphasizing the impor-

tance of following the teachings of the Church Fathers. Manuel argues for the impossibility of discovering divine truths solely through philosophical reasoning and claims to depart from the traditional method of syllogisms, arguments, and scriptural testimonies used by previous theologians. However, as DENDRINOS notes, the text often draws on arguments, scriptural references, and patristic sayings by various Orthodox theologians. As for sources and influences, DENDRINOS identifies multiple references to works by late Byzantine theologians such as Barlaam the Calabrian, Gregory Palamas, Nilus Cabasilas, Joseph Kalothetos, Makarios Makres, Joseph Bryennios, and Makarios of Ankara.

The primary focus on Trinitarian concepts clarifying the relation to the Son's position within the Trinity prompts Manuel to develop several key themes of Byzantine theology. Drawing on apophatic theology, he highlights the inadequacy of human understanding in fully grasping the nature of God and underscores the inherent limitations of cognition and language in comprehending or articulating divine attributes. In consonance with Palamite ideas officially sanctioned by the Church at the Council in Constantinople in 1351, the emperor adopts the Orthodox views on the distinction of divine essence, energy, and hypostases. He also addresses the question of soteriology, emphasizing the transformative power of divine grace in human nature, moving from disobedience to reconciliation with the divine. Furthermore, Manuel refutes the primacy of the Pope, demonstrating familiarity with the views of Thomas Aquinas.

A crucial contribution of the edition is DENDRINOS' detailed treatment of the transmission of the texts. He provides extensive descriptions of the manuscripts, in particular Vaticanus graecus 1107 (Diktyon 67738), Barberinianus graecus 210 (Diktyon 64756), which preserve versions of the *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, and Parisinus graecus 3041 (Diktyon 52686), which preserves the *Letter to Iagoupes*. The editor examines additions made to the manuscripts, including marginal titles, abbreviated notes, chapter headings, their history, and similarities to other manuscripts. Based on the watermarks and other features, DENDRINOS dates the Vaticanus to the early or mid-fifteenth century. He suggests that the manuscript was connected to Manuel Kalekas, a contemporary theologian who shared the same spiritual father as Manuel II, Demetrios Kydones. In addition, Makarios Makres' extensive annotations and corrections on Manuel's treatise *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* in the Vatican manuscript point to his active involvement in the production of the text. DENDRINOS suggests a close relationship between Manuel II and Makarios, which was re-

flected in the latter's revision of other theological texts by the emperor, as well. Furthermore, analysis of the manuscript reveals Manuel's working process. The editor demonstrates how the emperor collected folios of his work as mementos, as evidenced by a replaced folio in the Vaticanus containing his handwriting. This habit is corroborated by a similar instance in another manuscript containing Manuel's *Ethico-Political Orations*. The presence of both Manuel II's and Makarios' hands in different sections of the manuscripts, along with textual analysis and historical context, also helps establish a timeline of composition. By contrast, DENDRINOS indicates, the Barberinianus does not present many problems as it was part of Manuel's 'published' works and required few interventions or corrections. The Parisinus 3041 offers further evidence about the collaborative nature of Byzantine intellectual life. As in the Vaticanus, multiple hands, including those of scholars such as Makarios Makres, are evident throughout, adding corrections, annotations, and even entire sections. A number of marginal notes, later additions, and cross-references to other works further emphasize the active engagement with texts in a scholarly community characterized by intense cooperation. The analysis of all these editorial issues reveals the emperor's struggle to reconcile conflicting ideas and obligations. While supporting the theological traditions of the Byzantine Church, as indicated by the manuscripts, Manuel II also maintained contacts with Byzantine Latinophiles and sought, out of political necessity, assistance from the Catholic West.

CHARALAMBOS DENDRINOS has produced a fine scholarly edition that significantly contributes to our understanding of Manuel II Palaiologos as both a religious intellectual and a statesman. The editor's historical and philological observations are based on many years of research. The extensive apparatus and index contextualize the emperor's work within theological and philosophical traditions, allowing readers to trace the author's sources and intentions. This edition not only fills a crucial gap in the study of Manuel II Palaiologos but also points to the richness of his oeuvre and opens up avenues for further research, including a comprehensive study of Manuel II's sources and his engagement with earlier patristic and Byzantine theology.

Keywords

Byzantine theology; Manuel II Palaiologos; *Filioque* debate