

Some Remarks on Philo and Catechetical Tradition

(The lection will be delivered in English)

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From the 3rd century A.D. till early 5th century it was primarily those Greek and Latin authors, who devoted much time to teach catechumens that demonstrated knowledge of Philo's works (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, both Gregories of Cappadocia and Ambrose of Mediolanum, and, finally, Ambrose's disciple Augustine). But the issue of Philo's influence on such a well-known catechist as Cyril of Jerusalem seems more complicated. With the exception of the expression "sober intoxication"¹, which can be traced to Philo, of the notion of "healer (therapist) of spirits"² and of the expression "restorer of virginity of soul" as applied to Christ³, there is no textual evidence of the Cyril's knowledge of Philo's works. Besides, the details mentioned above may not have necessarily come down directly to Philo but might have been due to the transmission of the Philo's concepts through the Christian tradition preceding Cyril.

Nevertheless, the very fact of familiarity with Philo's expressions and ideas is remarkable, because Cyril was directly connected, albeit through conflict relations⁴, with the individuals that the humanity should be grateful to for the preservation of the Philo's heritage - with Bishop Acacius, who succeeded Eusebius on the Caesarean see, and his assistant Euzoius⁵. The Jerusalem Bishop's homilies can be used to discover those dogmatic *topoi*, into which the corresponding themes of the Philo's works could be inserted during the catechetical instruction in Jerusalem Church. For instance, such insertion is obvious, when Cyril treats the themes of the Providence in connection with the dogmatic concept of the Almighty and invisibility of God the Creator⁶.

The idea that Philo's treatise *De Providentia* was used by Christian catechists can be proven by the fact that Eusebius of Caesarea, citing sizable fragments of it in his *Evangelical Preparations*, says that the doctrine about the Providence is one of the main points that make up the gist of conversations with ordinary catechumens⁷. However, there is a difference between the Eusebius' doings and those of Cyril. The former brings Philo's text in order to supply the future catechist with arguments for the existence of the Providence, while the latter presents the same doctrine in the way, in which it can be comprehended by the flock. Would it not mean that Philo's texts from the very beginning were on the whole a compendium of manuals that were meant for the training of catechists but not catechumens? In that case the evasiveness of Christian authors, who used Philo's writings and their only infrequently broken silence about the

¹ *Catech.* XVII, 19 (PG 33.989C), cf. *Prob.* 2.13, and more distantly – *Contempl.* 89, Leg. 3. 26, 82 et al.

² *Catech.* X, 13 (PG 33, 667C), cf. *Contempl.* 2.

³ *Catech.* XII. 31 (PG 33. 765A), cf. *Cherub.* 14.I.148.

⁴ See S. Vailhé. *Formation du patriarcat de Jerusalem*, Echos d'Orient 13, 1910, 328-329.

⁵ For details see D.T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*. *Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, sec. III; *Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature*, vol.3, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993, pp.20-22.

⁶ *Catech.* VIII and especially IX.

⁷ *Praeparatio* 1.5.

source, could be explained by quite explicable unwillingness *to profane* the texts, which were intended for a small group of professionals.