

Eudocia: Homeric Centonist and Christian Theologian

Interdisciplinary studies correspond to the very nature of this epic poem as it represents epic classics and is simultaneously embedded in the Jesus-stories of the New Testament (NT) and in their reception at the time of this poem. Christian truth is extracted from Homer. Hence, cross-disciplinary co-operation is mandatory. My contribution looks into the “theology” of these Homeric Centos, based on the Iviron-version of the Centos. How does the blending of Homer and the Bible affect how Jesus and gospel-stories are portrayed here? The selection of biblical stories is of great interest in this gospel-harmony. Furthermore, how the selected stories are told and recast is also of much importance. Emphasis will be given to the healing stories. These stories are prone to bring out important aspects of the “theology” of Eudocia.

Eudocia’s biblical narrative consists of two parts, one from Old Testament (OT), and then from NT. OT serves as a preamble to the Jesus-story, and is construed as a Homeric counsel-meeting among the Olympian deities. Focus is on humankind’s need for salvation. A catena of Homeric sins is pointed out, reaching its peak in the lack of hospitality. In this situation “the best plan ever” is agreed upon between father and son.

The Jesus-stories are staged in such a way that they are removed from their Semitic setting and flavor. The scenes are often a Homeric palace with its halls. Conventions and type-scenes from Homer stage the Jesus-stories in such a way that they are transformed. The healing stories enhance the miraculous in Jesus’ ministry, and this becomes narrative means of expressing the poem’s Christology. Strangers from foreign countries are introduced into the poem in a way that sets the poem apart from their NT-hypotexts, albeit there are some hints from which the idea may have developed. The story of the blind man who sees his home exemplifies the way hospitality defines what Jesus offers the needy. The healing is construed as his returning to the fatherland. Homecoming-scenes and healing stories merge. Thus, the

healing stories embody the very plot of the *Odyssey*: a stranger being recognized and returning home. The healing stories encapsulate the intention of “the best plan ever,” namely to restore sinful humanity. Homecoming and hospitality become theological symbols for the salvation offered by Jesus. The healing stories are particularly suitable to unfold what the gospels is about. The poem works with different homecoming stories: as type-scenes in the *Odyssey* including that of Odysseus, Jesus’ homecoming and the needy finding their home. I wonder if the homecoming of the prodigal son (Luke 15) is also at work in the way meaning is attached to the healing stories. They become *mise en abyme* (Lucien Dällenbach), reduplicating what the entire poem is really about. I am especially interested in how participants in the workshop find my “theological” interpretation of the healing stories.

The blind man describes his distress in the following way:

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| 871 | If only I may return home (νοοστήσω) and look with eyes | <i>Il.</i> 5.212 |
| 872 | on my fatherland and wife and great high-roofed hall. | <i>Il.</i> 5.213 |
| 873 | Nothing is sweeter than one’s fatherland and parents, | <i>Od.</i> 9.34 |
| 874 | even if it is in a rich house far away | <i>Od.</i> 9.35 |
| 875 | in a foreign land that he lives far from his parents. | <i>Od.</i> 9.36 |
| 876 | But take pity, king, for it is to you, after many wicked labors, | <i>Od.</i> 6.175 |
| 877 | that I came first but know none of the other | <i>Od.</i> 6.176 |
| 878 | men who hold this city and land. | <i>Od.</i> 6.177 |
| 879 | To your feet and to your knees I come after many labors | <i>Od.</i> 7.147 |
| 880 | so you may set my step, an unfortunate man, in my fatherland | <i>Od.</i> 7.223 |

Jesus responds:

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| 895 | you may hope to see your friends then and return | <i>Od.</i> 6.134 |
| 896 | to your well-built house and fatherland | <i>Od.</i> 6.135 |
| 903 | Hold up, and do not grieve incessantly in your spirit. | <i>Il.</i> 24.549 |

904 I now send you off in a seemly way as you come *Od.* 10.65
905 quickly with joy, though you be from far away, *Od.* 7.194
906 to your fatherland and home and wherever may be dear to you (cf. 916) *Od.* 10.66

(The translation is Brian Duvick's which he has kindly given me access to.)

Bibliography

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