

"The Image of Adam's Glory":

Observations on the Early Christian Tradition of Luminosity as Iconic Garment

Bogdan G. Bucur and Vladimir Ivanovici

Abstract

The imagery of the "radiant body" and "luminous garment" occurs frequently in early Christian references to the Edenic state of Adam and its partial reinstatement by Moses, Jesus, and numerous saintly (usually ascetic) figures. This article offers a synthetic presentation of these traditions, sketching out its main articulations, its biblical-exegetical foundations, its points of continuity with the apocalyptic traditions of the Second Temple Era and parallels with the Rabbinic tradition.

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They said the following about Abba Pambo: just as Moses received the image of Adam's glory [τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς δόξης Ἀδὰμ] when his face was glorified, so also did Abba Pambo's face shine like lightning, and he was like a king seated on his throne.¹

[1] This short fragment, extracted from the late fifth- or early sixth-century collection of sayings known as the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, unveils the complex background that the appearance of individual holiness had in Late Antiquity. Pambo's metamorphosis referenced similar states particular to Adam, Moses, Jesus, rulers, and sundry saintly figures, each with its own distinct tradition. Between the second century BCE and the sixth century CE, the iconic potential of humanity inherent in its creation *κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ*² was interpreted diversely by a variety of groups. In the pages to follow we

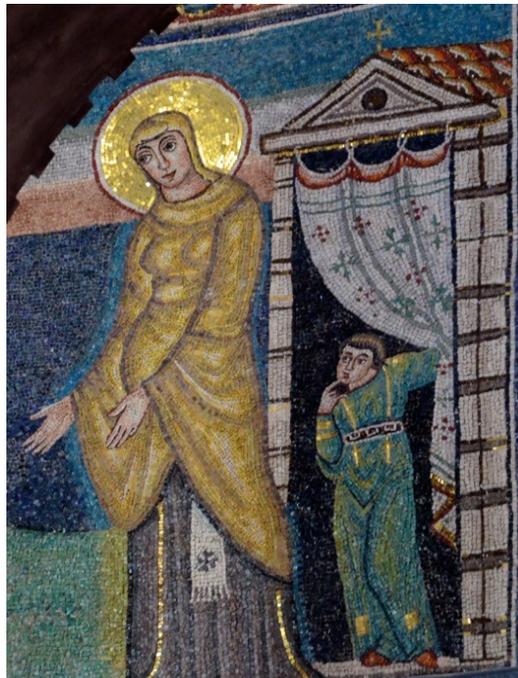
¹ *Apophthegmata Patrum*: Pambo, 12 (ed. PG 65.372, trans. Bogdan G. Bucur) Ἔλεγον περὶ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Παμβῶ, ὅτι ὡς ἔλαβε Μωϋσῆς τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς δόξης Ἀδὰμ, ὅτε ἐδοξάσθη τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ οὕτως καὶ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Παμβῶ ὡς ἀστραπὴ ἔλαμπε τὸ πρόσωπον, καὶ ἦν ὡς βασιλεὺς καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ. Τῆς αὐτῆς ἐργασίας ἦν καὶ ὁ ἀββᾶς Σιλουανὸς, καὶ ὁ ἀββᾶς Σισόης. On the text, see William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*, Oxford 2004. Given the extensive bibliography existing on many of the subjects addressed in our text, bibliographical references are indicative rather than extensive.

² Gen 1.26-27. We are using the following editions and translations: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. Rudolf Kittel et al., Stuttgart 1969-1975; *Septuaginta, id est, Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs, Stuttgart 1865-1935; *The Bible. The New Revised Standard Version*, ed. Bruce Metzger, New York 1989; *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, New York 2007.

discuss what we think are the main articulations of this tradition. In focus, given the subject of the present volume, is the metaphor of "luminous garment" used to describe embodied existence in its iconic state. Of the ways in which the living body came to manifest the divine in Late Antiquity—light and beauty, odour, wisdom, power—luminosity appears the most significant because, on the one hand, it bridged ancient and late ancient culture since light had been the medium par excellence of theophany in Antiquity. On the other, as light came to stand for all that was good, beautiful, and divine, it signalled the dawn of a new *Weltanschauung*. We will thus use corporeal luminosity as a *fil rouge* to bring together the various traditions of iconicity that met and merged in the figure of the Christian desert ascetic in Late Antiquity.

Negotiating "all the glory of Adam"

[2] Late antique Christian hagiography and art are replete with representations of sanctified human bodies becoming luminous both during their earthly existence and upon passing into the next (Fig. 1). These representations make implicit (and often explicit) reference to Jesus' Transfiguration, understood, as we shall show, as revealing the iconic potential inscribed in humanity at the very moment of its creation.



1 Detail from the Visitation scene with Elizabeth exiting the house to welcome the Virgin Mary, her pregnant body glowing. Mosaic, Basilica Eufrasiana, Poreč, ca. 560 AD (photo: Vladimir Ivanovici)

The synoptic Gospels assign a prominent place to a vision report which describes Christ, flanked by Moses and Elijah, suddenly transfigured—his face, his entire body,

and even his clothes flashing brilliantly.³ Represented in the apse of the church of Saint Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai commissioned by emperor Justinian (r. 527-565), the episode echoes the motifs of glory, light, cloud, divine voice, and luminosity associated with the Sinai theophanies (Fig. 2).⁴



2 Mosaic decoration of the apse and arch of St. Catherine's at Mount Sinai, ca. 548-565 AD (photo © CCA, Centro di Conservazione Archeologica - Rome)

[3] In the words of one of so many scholars who have studied the Sinai-Tabor parallels, the Transfiguration is "a replay of Sinai [...] a second Sinai, where a miracle of old was repeated".⁵ Indeed, when Moses had descended from Mount Sinai, after having spent forty days gazing on the glory of God, the Israelites were at first afraid to approach him, because, unbeknownst to him, his face had been "made glorious [δεδόξασται]".⁶ Just as on Sinai, where, as the text of *Exodus* explains, the luminous visage is a result of Moses' interaction with God, so also at the Tent of Meeting: As a guarantee that the experience of Sinai has been successfully replicated by means of ritual, and, as it were, made mobile, "when he came out [...] the sons of Israel saw the face of Moyses that it was charged with glory [δεδόξασται]".⁷ This "glorification" of Moses' face is precisely the reference point for the portrayal of Pambo in the *Apophthegmata*: "just as Moses [...] when his face was glorified [έδοξάσθη], so also did Abba Pambo's shine

³ In the Gospel of Matthew, the Transfiguration is termed a "vision" (ὄραμα, Matt 17.9), very likely alluding to Moses' "great vision" at the burning bush (Exod 3.3, τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα).

⁴ Exod. 3, 19, 24, 34. See e.g. Jarl Fossum, "Glory", in: *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn et al., Leiden 1996, 348-352.

⁵ Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, Minneapolis 1993, 246-247.

⁶ Exod. 34.29-31.

⁷ Exod. 34.34-35.

like lightning".⁸ The anonymous author of the *Apophthegmata* further extended the connotations of Pambo's iconicity by referencing "the image of Adam's glory". Jewish and Christian traditions understood Moses' "glorified" face not simply as the result of his forty-day sojourn on Sinai and interaction with God but as a recovery, to some degree, of Adam's glory; a state perfected in Enoch-Metatron and Jesus in parallel traditions budding around the turn of the millennium.⁹ It is, paradoxically, the oldest strain of the stance, the iconicity of Adam, that bridged the Jewish anthropological tradition of *Genesis* with Roman culture as it cast the relationship between the person and the iconic aura in terms of "garments" that the Roman could appreciate given the common practice of marking one's status—socio-political, religious, and spiritual—on the body through costume.¹⁰

[4] The mythologem of the luminous Adam is abundantly present in Jewish and Christian tradition. According to it, the image of God in Adam was represented by the protoplast's luminous glory; an uncreated light that covered him in Eden and rendered him the focus of the rest of Creation's worship.¹¹ In both early Judaism and early Christianity it is a commonplace to state that, made in the image of God who "clothes himself in light as in a garment",¹² Adam was also clothed in a luminous garment of glory, and that the same luminous glory shone on Moses' face on Sinai. Among Jewish sources, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, a work composed around 750 CE but incorporating material going back to the Pseudepigrapha, puts it this way:

*What was the dress of the first man? A skin of nails and a cloud of glory covered him. When he ate of the fruits of the tree, the nail-skin was stripped off him, and the cloud of glory departed from him, and he saw himself naked.*¹³

⁸ See above, n. 1.

⁹ On Enoch-Metatron, see e.g. Andrei Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, Tübingen 2005 (= *Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism*, 107).

¹⁰ See e.g. *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson and Alison E. Keith, Toronto 2008.

¹¹ For texts and discussion, see Alon Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature", in: *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), 171-195; David H. Aaron, "Shedding Light on God's Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam", in: *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997), 299-314.

¹² Ps. 103/104.2 ἀναβαλλόμενος φῶς ὡς ἱμάτιον.

¹³ *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna*, trans. G. Friedländer, New York 1965, 14.98 מה היה לבושו של אדם הראשון עור צפורן וענן כבוד המכסה עליו וכיון שאכל מפירות האילן נפשט עורו וצפורן מעליו ונסתלקה ענן כבוד מעליו וראה עצמו ערום. On the dating, see Moshe David Herr, "Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer", in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 13, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, Jerusalem 2007, 2nd ed., 182-183.

On the Christian side we have, among many others, the fourth-century testimony of Ephrem of Nisibis's (306–373) *Commentary on Genesis*:

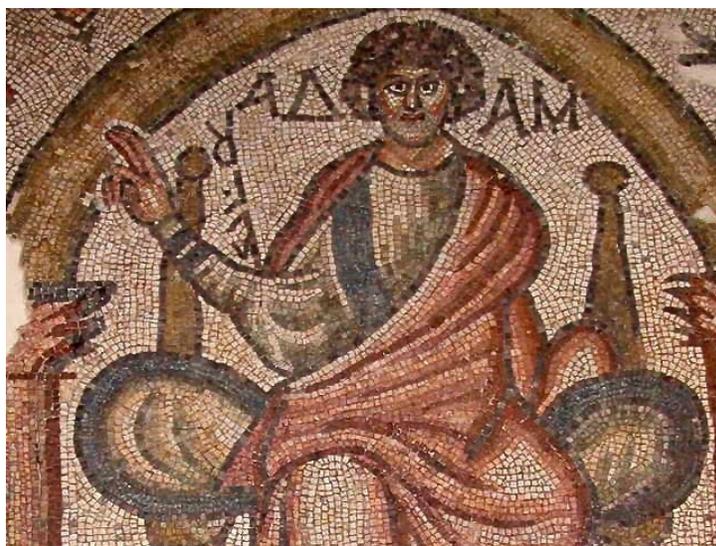
*It was because of the glory with which they were clothed that they were not ashamed. It was when this glory was stripped from them after they had transgressed the commandment that they were ashamed because they were naked [...] Just as Israel, without a veil, was unable to look upon the face of Moses, neither were the animals able to look upon the splendor of Adam and Eve.*¹⁴

[5] Extant representations of Adam from fourth- and fifth-century Syria attest to the popularity of the theme in the period and area where Christian ascetics were held to be transfigured by light (Fig. 3). Depicted as reigning in heaven or naming the animals, as in Ephrem's text, Adam is shown as a royal figure, enthroned and donning either white or purple symbols of luminosity.¹⁵ While being an easily recognisable visual formula for late antique audiences, a period when emperors adorned themselves with the most reflecting materials in order to stimulate their perception as divine,¹⁶ the representation of corporeal luminosity as garments also had biblical roots.

¹⁴ Ephrem of Nisibis, *Commentary on Genesis* 2.14-15 (ed. R. M. Tonneau, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* [CSCO] 152: 33; trans.: *St. Ephrem the Syrian, Selected Prose Works: Commentary on Genesis, Commentary on Exodus, Homily on Our Lord, Letter to Publius*, ed. Kathleen McVey, trans. Edward G. Matthews Jr., Washington, D.C. 1994 [= *The Fathers of the Church*, 91], 106-107).

¹⁵ On purple's luminosity and other symbolic connotations, see e.g. Oddono Longo, ed., *La porpora: realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico*, Venice 1998. Apart from the Hama mosaic that shows Adam clothed in purple (s. Fig. 3), the one from the church in Huarte and the one presently at the National Museum in Copenhagen, presumably also from Syria, show him in donning white and purple costumes. See Maria-Teresa Canivet and Pierre Canivet, "La mosaïque d'Adam dans l'église syrienne de Hūarte", in: *Cahiers archéologiques* 24 (1975), 49-70; Henry Maguire, "Adam and the Animals: Allegory and the Literal Sense in Early Christian Art", in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), 363-273.

¹⁶ See the contributions by Valerio Neri and Susanna Elm in this special issue; Vladimir Ivanovici, *Chosen Vessels: Embodying the Divine in Late Antiquity*, forthcoming.



3 Mosaic panel showing Adam reigning over Creation, enthroned and donning purple. Syria, fifth century. Currently in the Museum of Hama, Syria (photo: Claude Zerez)

[6] The change of state, from inhabitants of Eden to mere earthlings, is expressed by a verse that refers to a new and different garment: "And the Lord God made garments of skins [עֹר קְטָנוֹת; χιτῶνας δερματίνους] for Adam and for his wife and clothed them".¹⁷ In Hebrew the homophony between עֹר ("skins") and אֹר ("light") was a source of speculation about Adam's garment of light and its (partial) recuperation by Moses.¹⁸ Adam's iconicity was cast in terms shaped by Temple traditions. Thus, the protoplast is described as of priestly status, and assigned the same duties that the Levites have in the Tent of Meeting.¹⁹ This is not surprising, in fact, since the Eden narrative is shaped by the Temple experience. The *Book of Jubilees* (dated to the middle of the second century BCE) states explicitly that "the Garden of Eden was the Holy of Holies and the dwelling of the Lord".²⁰ To this end, *Jubilees* further confirms the sacral status of Eden by its reference to the morning and evening offering up of incense, one of the priestly

¹⁷ Gen. 3.21.

¹⁸ April DeConick and Jarl Fossum, "Stripped Before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas", in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991), 123-150.

¹⁹ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Dallas 2002, 67: "man's job in the garden is 'to till it and guard it'. עָבַד, 'to serve, till' is a very common verb and is often used of cultivating the soil (Gen. 2.5; 3.23; 4.2, 12, etc.). The word is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g., Deut. 4.19), and in priestly texts, especially of the Tabernacle duties of the Levites (Num. 3.7-8; 4.23-24, 26, etc.). Similarly, שָׁמַר, 'to guard, to keep' has the simple profane sense of 'guard' (Gen. 4.9; 30.31), but it is even more commonly used in legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (Gen. 17.9; Lev. 18.5) and particularly of the Levitical responsibility for guarding the Tabernacle from intruders (Num. 1.53; 3.7-8). It is striking that here and in the priestly law these two terms are juxtaposed (Num. 3.7-8; 8.26; 18.5-6), another pointer to the interplay of Tabernacle and Eden..."

²⁰ Jub. 8.19.

duties and privileges:²¹ on the morning of his first day of exile, Adam offers up incense outside of the Garden of Eden—corresponding to the incense burned in the Holy place of the temple, outside of the Holy of Holies—and Enoch will offer up incense in the evening.²² Humankind, then, is understood in Jewish milieu as the "priest" of creation, appropriately therefore assigned a place in the "temple" of Eden. Conversely, priestly anointing and service represents a symbolic (that is, in Antiquity, *real*) reinstatement of Adamic humanity. Transferred to the High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem, Adam's iconic aura was indicated by the sacerdot's vestment. The priestly garments are made "for glory",²³ a theme developed insistently by Philo,²⁴ and in *Sirach's* description of the High Priest:

*How glorified [ὡς ἐδοξάσθη] he was as he spun around the shrine, as he exited from the house of the veil. Like a morning star in the midst of a cloud, like the full moon in the days of a feast, like the sun shining on the shrine of the Most High, like the rainbow gleaming in clouds of glory [...] When he put on a robe of glory [στολήν δόξης; כִּבְדֵי כְבוֹד] [...] in ascending the holy altar, he glorified the enclosure of the holy precinct.*²⁵

[7] A representation of Aaron as High Priest preserved in the synagogue of Dura Europos, on the eastern fringes of Syria, decorated around 244 CE makes the case (Fig. 4).²⁶ Aaron, who is identified by an inscription in Greek, stands in front of the

²¹ Exod. 30.7-8, 34-38; Num. 17.4-5; 2 Chron. 26.16-20.

²² On Adam, see Jub. 3.27; on Enoch, see Jub. 4.25. Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, "Eden and the Temple: The Rewriting of Genesis 2.4-3.24 in The Book of Jubilees", in: *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, Leiden 1999, 63-81, esp. 75-79. On Eden as temple, see Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story", in: *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies 9* (1986), 19-25; Dan Liroy, *Axis of Glory: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Temple Motif in Scripture*, New York 2010, 5-16 and 33-38; L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, Leuven 2012, 205-243.

²³ Exod 28:2 (Masoretic Text): "for glory and for beauty" (לְכָבוֹד, וּלְתִפְאֵרֶת); Exod 28:2 (The Septuagint): "for honour and for glory" (εἰς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν).

²⁴ Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE – ca. 50 CE), *Vita Moysis* II.23-26 (*Philo. In Ten Volumes*, ed. and trans. Francis H. Colson, vol. 6, 5th ed., London 1984 [= *Loeb Classical Library*, 289], 502-514); cf. the High Priest's cosmic sacerdotal function detailed in Philo, *Spec.* I.17 (*Philo. In Ten Volumes*, ed. and trans. Francis H. Colson, vol. 7, 6th ed., London 1998 [= *Loeb Classical Library*, 320], 154). See Annette Weissenrieder, "A Roadmap to Heaven: High-Priestly Vestments and the Jerusalem Temple in Flavius Josephus", in: *Beyond Priesthood. Religious Entrepreneurs and Innovators in the Roman Empire*, eds. Richard L. Gordon, Georgia Petridou and Jörg Rüpke, Berlin 2017 (= *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*, 66), 157-183.

²⁵ Sir. 50.5-10.

²⁶ On the synagogue in Dura and its paintings, see Lee I. Levine and Zeev Weiss, eds., *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, Portsmouth 2000 (= *JRA Supplements*, 40); Jaś Elsner, "Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image. The Case of Dura-

Tabernacle altar and dons the priestly costume described in Exodus, while the other five characters in the scene, presumably his sons, wear Persian costumes.²⁷ The peculiarity of the costume draws attention to the High Priest's special status, while the combined visual effect of the purple, gold and jewels that composed it referenced his iconic function in the manner detailed in Sirach.²⁸



4 Aaron as High Priest in front of the Tabernacle. Painting by Herbert J. Gute (1907–1977) after the Dura Europos synagogue frescoes (ca. 250 AD) (photo: © Yale University Art Gallery)

[8] In Christianity the connection between Adam, Moses, and the High Priest was further extended to Jesus and certain saintly ascetics. Mainstream “proto-orthodox” writers such as Irenaeus of Lyon (d. 202) articulated their theology of the Fall-and-messianic-restoration by interpreting the luminous garment as the gift of the Holy Spirit, lost in Eden, recovered in Christian baptism, and brought to full expression in the eschaton.²⁹ Consequently, early Christian readers of *Genesis* assumed that, with

Europos”, in: *Classical Philology* 96 (2001), 269-304; Annabel Jane Wharton, “Good and Bad Images from the Synagogue of Dura-Europos: Contexts, Subtexts, Intertexts”, in: *Art History* 17 (1994), 1-25.

²⁷ Exod. 28.1-39; 39.1-26 and 126. See Kära L. Schenk, “Temple, Community, and Sacred Narrative in the Dura-Europos Synagogue”, in: *AJS Review* 34/2 (Nov. 2010), 195-229, 207-209.

²⁸ References to corporeal luminosity that was miraculous and unrelated to the garment of the High Priest are also found, cf. e.g. *Lev. Rab.* 21:12: “when the Holy Spirit rested upon Phinehas, his face flamed like torches about him” (*Midrash Rabbah*, vol. 4: *Leviticus*, ed. Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, Engl. trans. J. Israelstam, London 1951, 274-275).

²⁹ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.23.5; 4.36.6 (ed. PG 7). For Second Temple background of these ideas and a large number of texts, see Alexander Golitzin, “Recovering the ‘Glory of Adam’: ‘Divine Light’ Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetic Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia”, in: *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers from an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001*, ed. James R. Davila, Leiden 2003 (= *Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah*, 46), 275-308. For the centrality of this motif, in Syriac Christianity in Late Antiquity, see Sebastian P. Brock, “Clothing

the opening of their eyes brought about by their partaking of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve recognised not *that they had been naked all along*, but rather that *they had just become naked*, stripped of their garment of light. They assumed further that this luminous garment of glory, the prodigal son's "former robe",³⁰ can be recovered by "putting on Christ" in baptism, "putting on the new man", "putting on the armour of God".³¹

[9] In sum, the tradition of Adam's luminous glory which survived in various strands of Jewish, and later Jewish-Christian thought was used to reclaim for the groups' focal figures the iconic status of the protoplast. Moses, Enoch, or the priests at the Temple in Jerusalem were presented and represented as embodiments of the iconic state of humanity.³² The Transfiguration of Jesus on the Tabor as well as the iconic luminosity of the desert ascetics were both rooted in and incorporated many of these traditions of corporeal iconicity.

Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition", in: *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. Margot Schmidt and Carl-Friedrich Geyer, Regensburg 1982, 11-38; Hannah Hunt, *Clothed in the Body: Asceticism, the Body and the Spiritual in the Late Antique Era*, Farnham 2012.

³⁰ Luke 15.22, "Bring forth the former robe [στολήν τὴν πρώτην] and clothe him". Many New Testament scholars accept both meanings of πρώτη: "of first value, best" and "chronologically first, prior, former". See Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, *Die Re-Investitur des verlorenen Sohnes in der Gleichniserzählung Jesu: Luk. 15.11-33*, Cologne/Opladen 1967, 40-45; R. Alan Culpepper, *Luke-John*, Nashville 1995, 302-303; François Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc [15.1-19.27]*, Geneva 2001, 47-48. On the Christian reception of the Transfiguration account, see John A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, Lewiston, NY 1986; Jarl E. Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels", and "Partes Posteriores Dei: The Transfiguration of Jesus in the Acts of John", in id., *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology*, Freiburg and Göttingen 1995, 71-94; 95-108; Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography*, Crestwood, NY 2005.

³¹ Gal 3.27, ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε; Eph 4.24, "[you were taught] to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God" / ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα; Eph 6.11, ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

³² Note, however, that a significant strand in the early Jewish exegesis of Gen. 3.21 (*Gen. Rab.* 20.10 and the Neofiti, Onkelos, and Ps-Jonathan Targums) holds that the Lord clothed Adam and Eve *not* with garments of skins but with garments of glory—meaning that the luminous garment was received *after* their act of disobedience. See *Gen. Rab.* 20.12: "In R. Meir's Torah it was found written, 'Garments of light ('ō r)'. This refers to the clothes of the first man, which were like a torch [shedding radiance], broad at the bottom and narrow at the top. Isaac the Elder said: 'They were as smooth as a finger-nail and as beautiful as a jewel.'" According to Alexander Toepel, "When Did Adam Wear the Garments of Light?", in: *Journal of Jewish Studies* 61 (2010), 62-71, the drive for this interpretation was the polemical reaction to Christian speculations about the recovery of the pre-lapsarian garment.

Waiting for the body

[10] When articulating the eschatological hope of first-century Jesus followers, Paul writes: "the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us".³³ This endtime "glory" is, of course, also about the luminous appearance of the body. Paul also spoke of an eschatological "clothing",³⁴ a universal transformation when "we shall all be changed",³⁵ which would render "the body of our humiliation" compatible to "the body of his [Christ's] glory".³⁶ A text of the late first or early second century reveals the existence of similar concerns in Jewish milieu. Conventionally entitled *Second Baruch*, the text imagines a dialogue between the prophet Baruch and God and voices very specific and pressing eschatological concerns and aspirations: In what *shape* will we exist in that day? Will it be a definite shape, or will we change into any shape we wish? How much change and how much continuity will there be in our bodies and in the entire world? Will humans become angelic or at least angelomorphic? The response to these queries is the following:

*Also, the glory of those who have now been made righteous by my Law, who had understanding in their life, and who have planted the root of wisdom in their heart, then their splendor will be glorified in changes, and the appearance of their face will be turned into the light of their beauty, so that they may be able to acquire and receive the world which does not die, which is then promised to them. For they will behold the world which is now invisible to them, and they will behold the time which is now hidden from them. And time will no longer age them. For they will dwell in the heights of that world, and they will be made like angels. And they will be made equal to stars, and they will be changed into any form they desire; from beauty into loveliness, and from light into the splendor of glory.*³⁷

[11] Such a reflection on humanity's eschatological iconicity may be understood as responding to, and postponing, the communities' desire for physical markers here and now. Paul's addressees in 2 Corinthians, for instance, were interested in the appearance of holiness, with Paul seeking to reconcile the model offered by the Incarnation with the expectations of the time. In Corinth, the people expected a powerful corporeal effect similar to the shining face of Moses.³⁸ This suited ancient

³³ Rom. 8.18.

³⁴ 1 Cor. 15.53-54; 2 Cor. 5.3.

³⁵ 1 Cor. 15.51.

³⁶ Phil. 3.21.

³⁷ 2 Bar. 51.3-10, quoted according to *Second Baruch: A Critical Edition of the Syriac Text. With Greek and Latin Fragments, English Translation, Introduction, and Concordances*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, London 2009, 88/89-90/9.

³⁸ George H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context. The Image of God, Assimilation to God and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity*, Tübingen 2008.

notions of personal holiness, which was expected to manifest as physical beauty.³⁹ Paul's response is to present his own tortured body as iconic on account of his tribulations.⁴⁰ Later on, mainstream "proto-orthodox" Christianity used Paul's Adamic christology to postulate an exalted state already while in the body.

[12] To return to the earlier discussion of Tabor as "new Sinai", it should be noted that early Christians understood the transfigured Jesus as displaying before his disciples the icon of the protological and eschatological Adam: the prodigal son clothed anew with his former robe of glory. As noted above, undoing what went wrong in Eden and restoring fallen Adam can be understood as doffing the old man and donning the new man, by "putting on Christ" in baptism and being further "clothed" with the virtues as with vestments and armour—all of which is a readying of one's "wedding garment" for the eschatological banquet.⁴¹ Through ritual cleansing in baptism and imitation of Jesus in daily life one could thus bring the living body to gain the capacity to contain and radiate the uncreated light.⁴²

[13] These notions emerged and became central to Christian practice in the context of ascetic practice. Located in areas where traditions of the luminous/flesh garments, Adamic luminosity, and iconicity had been kept alive by various groups, Christian asceticism led to the particular expression found in the *Apophthegmata*. In the deserts of Syria and Egypt the bodies of ascetics catalysed the mixing of neighbouring traditions in a syncretistic dynamic that was specific to the phenomenon.⁴³ The resulting anthropological model, despite referencing diverse iconic traditions, was rendered credible by the lives of individuals who seemed to embody the stance:

*Among them [the saints] none is naked, for they have put on glory [...] they have found, through our Lord, the robe that belongs to Adam and Eve.*⁴⁴

³⁹ E.g. the second-century pagan philosopher Celsus who held, in the spirit of his time, that if Jesus would have had a privileged relationship with the divine it would have shown on His body through stature, beauty, strength, voice, impressiveness, or persuasiveness (cf. Origen, *Cont. Cels.* 6.75-7, ed. PG 11.1413).

⁴⁰ Gal. 2.4, 6.17. See Stephen Anthony Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch: Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2*, Cambridge 2004; Ivanovici, *Chosen Vessels*.

⁴¹ Matt. 22.11-12.

⁴² For the ritual mise-en-scène of the concept of "putting on Christ" in baptism in late antique Christianity, see Vladimir Ivanovici, *Manipulating Theophany: Light and Ritual in North Adriatic Architecture (ca. 400-ca. 800)*, Berlin 2016 (= *Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, 6), 19-108.

⁴³ E.g. David Frankfurter, "Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt", in: *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003), no. 3, 339-385; id., *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity*, Princeton, NJ 2017.

⁴⁴ Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306-373), *Par.* 6.9 (ed. E. Beck, CSCO 174:21; trans. Sebastian P. Brock, *St Ephrem. Hymns on Paradise*, Crestwood, NY 1990, 112). On the intriguing presence of Jewish apocalyptic elements in Syriac Christian literature, see Golitzin, "Recovering the 'Glory of

Blinding light, different appearance

[14] There is more we can know about the luminous splendour adorning Adam, Moses, Christ and the host of sanctified individuals both in this age and the age to come. The *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (*LAB*), a work very likely originating in Palestine in the second half of the first or the early second century CE, offers the following re-writing of Moses' iconicity:

*Moses came down. Having been bathed with light that could not be gazed upon [perfusus esset lumine invisibili], he had gone down to the place where the light of the sun and the moon are. The light of his face surpassed the splendor of the sun and the moon, but he was unaware of this. When he came down to the children of Israel, upon seeing him they did not recognize/know him. But when he had spoken, then they recognized/knew him.*⁴⁵

[15] The difference between the biblical texts describing the transfiguration of Moses and the *LAB* is quite significant. In the first case, the glory on Moses' face is perceived as a fearsome and blinding light, so intense that the Israelites "could not gaze at Moses' face" and were afraid; there is no indication, however, that Moses would not have been recognized. By contrast, in the *LAB*, the light of glory (which extends to Moses' entire body) is not perceived as light by anyone—it is "invisible", but instead effects a complete lack of recognition.⁴⁶ The same phenomenon occurs at the death of Moses: "he died in glory", "his appearance became glorious", and he remained invisible to both angels and humans.⁴⁷

[16] We can posit a link between the puzzling non-recognition of Moses and his participation in all things "glorious" and "luminous". According to the *Liber*, the manner of worship revealed on Sinai was meant to establish among the Israelites God's tent of glory (11.15); the Ten Commandments, also, given by God "who is all light" (12.9) were meant as a "light" for Israel, so that the Israelites be "glorified" (11.2). After the forty

Adam".

⁴⁵ *LAB* 12.1 (ed. and trans. Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum with Latin Text and English Translation*, 2 vols., Leiden 1996, vol. 1, 18/110): *Et descendit Moyses. Et cum perfusus esset lumine invisibili, descendit in locum ubi lumen solis et lune est; vicit lumen faciei sue splendorem solis et lune, et hoc nesciebat ipse. Et factum est cum descenderet ad filios Israel, videntes non cognoscebant eum. Cum autem locutus fuisset, tunc cognoverunt eum.*

⁴⁶ Seth Sanders, "Old Light on Moses' Shining Face", in: *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002), 400-407: 404 suggests that the non-recognition motif in the *LAB* is actually extracted right out of the biblical text: "Moses' physical proximity to the source of revelation added a layer to his appearance, a physical mark of inhumanity, and it is possible that the Israelites shrank away from Moses simply because they did not recognize him behind his divine persona. The Exodus passage introduces the religious problem of how divine radiance might be visualized and incorporated into the body."

⁴⁷ *LAB* 19.16 (ed. and trans. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, vol. 1, 29/123).

days on Sinai contemplating the heavenly abode, Moses' face is "gloriosissima". Similarly, after the heavenly visions shortly prior to his death, "his appearance became glorious, and he died in glory".⁴⁸ The process of "glorification" makes Moses similar to God—simultaneously luminous and inaccessible⁴⁹—and introduces a certain incompatibility between Moses and the people: he is "charged with glory", while they are not, he is bathed in *lumen invisibile*, while they are not.

[17] *LAB* 61.5-9 gives a similar account of David:

God sent Zeruel, the angel in charge of power. [...] David put a stone in the sling and struck the Philistine on his forehead. He ran toward him and unsheathed his sword. [...] David said to him: 'Before you die, open your eyes and see your slayer who has killed you.' The Philistine looked and saw the angel and said: 'Not you alone killed me, but also he who was present with you, whose appearance is not like the appearance of a man [cuius species non est sicut species hominis].' Then David cut his head. The angel of the Lord changed David's appearance, and no one recognized him [*erexit faciem David et nemo agnoscebat eum*]. When Saul saw David, he asked him who he was, and there was no one who recognized him [*non erat qui cognosceret eum*].⁵⁰

The lack of recognition is here further explained as the result of some otherworldly intervention, which effects a *change in appearance* that renders David unrecognisable. The *LAB* evidently assumes that David's angelic—ergo, luminous—appearance is

⁴⁸ *LAB* 19.16 (ed. and trans. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, vol. 1, 29/123): *mutata est effigies eius in gloria et mortuus est in gloria*.

⁴⁹ Regarding the Biblical God: "[W]rapped in light as with a garment" (Ps. 104/103.2), "dwelling in light unapproachable" (1 Tim 6.16) or "in thick darkness" (1 Kgs. 8.12; 3 Rgns. 8.3; 2 Sam. 22.12; Ps. 18/17.11). In Mesopotamian civilisations: Amar Annus, "The Mesopotamian Precursors of Adam's Garment of Glory and Moses' Shining Face", in: *Identities and Societies in the Ancient East-Mediterranean Regions: Comparative Approaches. Henning Graf Reventlow Memorial Volume*, ed. Thomas R. Kämmerer, Münster 2011, 1-17. It is interesting to note that the exceeding luminosity of Ancient Near Eastern divinities may also render them invisible or unrecognisable to humans. See Michael B. Hundley, *Keeping Heaven on Earth: Safeguarding the Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle*, Tübingen 2011, 42 and 42 n. 23: "Another notable aspect of the *melammu* is that its pulsating light can render its wearer unrecognizable. [...] Thus, in Mesopotamia, and potentially in Egypt and elsewhere, when gods appear on earth, they are resplendent in fiery and brilliant attire, which at times is so luminous that it obscures their true identities [...] the *melammu* does indeed mask its bearer by surrounding him with pulsating light."

⁵⁰ *LAB* 61.5-9 (ed. and trans. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, vol. 1, 83/189): *Et misit Deus Zervihel angelum prepositum super virtutem. [...] Et misit David in fundibulo lapidem, et percussit Allophilum in fronte sua. Et cucurrit super eum, et evaginavit rompheam eius. [...] Et dixit ei David: Antquam moriaris aperi oculos tuos, et vide interfectorem tuum qui te interfecit. Et respiciens Allophilus vidit angelum et dixit: Non solus occidisti me, sed tecum aderat, cuius species non est sicut species hominis. Et tunc David abstulit caput eius ab eo. Angelus autem Domini erexit faciem David, et nemo agnoscebat eum. Et videns Saul David, interrogavit eum quis esset, et non erat qui cognosceret eum.*

ultimately due to the presence of the same "invisible light" that rendered Moses unrecognisable.

[18] Both episodes from the *LAB* find their closest parallel in three New Testament accounts in which the disciples fail to recognise the risen Jesus: John 20.14-16 (Mary Magdalene sees him but thinks he is a gardener), John 21.1-4 (he appears to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, but they "did not know that it was Jesus"), and, finally, Luke's Emmaus story (Luke 24.13-35) and its retelling by the Longer Ending of Mark (Mark 16.12, "he appeared in another form [ἐν ἑτέρῳ μορφῇ] to two of them"). As argued at length elsewhere,⁵¹ Luke and his contemporaries assumed that, when one is wrapped in divine light (the glory of Sinai, of the Transfiguration, or of the Resurrection), one becomes unrecognisable to people who are not open to the same presence of God. The glory of the resurrected Jesus is a state of intense luminosity, invisible but effective: it is not perceived as dazzling light surrounding Jesus (as had been the case at the Transfiguration) or mistaken for a ghost bearing the traits of Jesus (as later in Luke 24.37), but it does effect a certain confusion, which results in the misidentification of the risen Jesus. The reason, as in the *LAB*, is the invisible light of divine glory.

[19] "I have no idea what 'invisible light' [...] could mean here", writes Roman Jacobson, the most recent editor, translator, and commentator of *LAB*. He thinks, nevertheless, that *lumen invisibile* probably refers to "light that one is unable to gaze upon"—"ἀθέατον φῶς" at 2 Cor. 3.7.⁵² Christian tradition might shed some light on this obscure point. Let us consult the rich exegetical tapestry woven in the Ps.-Macarian Homilies:

For 'our God is a consuming fire' (Heb. 12.29), 'taking revenge on those who do not know him in flaming fire and who do not obey his Gospel' (2 Thess. 1.8). This fire exerted its power over the Apostles when they spoke with tongues of fire (Acts 2.35). This fire surrounded Paul in the voice that enlightened his mind while blinding his sense of sight (Acts 9.3). [...] This fire appeared to Moses in the bush (Exod. 3.2). This fire, in the form of a chariot, caught up Elijah from the earth (2 Kgs. 4.11). The blessed David, while seeking out the power of this fire, said: 'Search me, Lord, and try me. Burn out my reins and my heart' (Ps. 26.2). This fire inflamed the heart of Cleophas and his companion when the Savior spoke to them after the resurrection (Luke 24.32).⁵³

⁵¹ Bogdan G. Bucur, "Blinded by Invisible Light: Revisiting the Emmaus Story (Luke 24,13-35)", in: *ETL* 90 (2014), 685-707.

⁵² Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, vol. 1, 482.

⁵³ Ps.-Macarius, *Hom. Coll.* 2.25.9-10 (ed. Matthias Kröger, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, Berlin 1964 [= *Patristische Texte und Studien*, 4], 204; trans. George A. Maloney SJ, *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, Mahwah, NJ 1992, 163): ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκον ἐστὶ, διδοὺς <ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν αὐτὸν ἐν φλογὶ πυρὸς καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσι τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ αὐτοῦ>. τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ ἐνήργησεν ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, ἡνίκα ἐλάλουν γλώσσαις πυρίναις. τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ διὰ τῆς φωνῆς Παύλου

[20] Briefly put, anyone drawing near God has always encountered the light of real Divine ("Christophanic") Presence granting purification, illumination, and transformation according to the pattern of the Risen Christ. This light now—in the experience of early Christians—dwelled on desert ascetics like Pambo, whose prolonged and sustained asceticism has rendered their bodies similar to those of Moses on Sinai and of the three chosen apostles on Tabor, worthy to receive glimpses of the uncreated light. Unlike the emperor and the High Priest, whose luminosity was given by purple/hyacinth costumes adorned with gold and jewels, the desert ascetics shone in the body in the manner of Moses and Jesus, with the drab clothing of the desert testifying that the "garment" was the body that the Incarnation had exalted.⁵⁴ Whether manifest as visible light or 'hidden' inside the ascetic's body and attested by his or her otherworldly resistance in the tradition of the early martyrs,⁵⁵ the Divine Image is displayed in the ascetic, and in contemplating it the viewer was consecrated.

[21] By interpreting the ascetics' emaciated bodies as pervaded by the divine light, Christian tradition refashioned them into living icons of God.⁵⁶ As such, the living

περιλάμπαν, τὴν μὲν διάνοιαν αὐτοῦ ἐφώτισε, τὴν δὲ αἴσθησιν τῆς ὄψεως αὐτοῦ ἡμαύρωσεν [...] τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ ὤφθη Μωϋσῆ ἐν τῇ βάρῳ. τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ ἐν εἶδει ὀχήματος Ἠλίαν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἤρπασε. τούτου τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν ἐνέργειαν ζητῶν ὁ μακάριος Δαβὶδ ἔλεγε· «δοκίμασόν με, κύριε, καὶ πείρασόν με, πύρωσον τοὺς νεφρούς μου καὶ τὴν καρδίαν μου». τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ τὴν καρδίαν Κλεόπα καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ ἐθέρμανε, λαλοῦντος τοῦ σωτῆρος μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν.

⁵⁴ Stephen J. Davis, "Fashioning a Divine Body: Coptic Christology and Ritualized Dress", *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005), 335-362; Caroline T. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe*, Philadelphia 2007; Rebecca Krawiec, "'Garments of Salvation': Representations of Monastic Clothing in Late Antiquity", in: *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17 (2009), no. 1, 125-150. On spiritual state marked through costume, see Kristi Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority*, New York and London 2011; Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae: A Visual Construction of Identity*, Tübingen 2012 (= *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* II, 334).

⁵⁵ See, Ivanovici, *Chosen Vessels*.

⁵⁶ Georgia Frank and Patricia Cox Miller studied the forms of visual piety that characterised pilgrimage to Christian ascetics. See Georgia Frank, "The Pilgrim's Gaze in the Age before Icons", in: *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. Robert S. Nelson, Cambridge 2000, 98-115; id., *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2000 (= *Transformations of Classical Heritage*, 30); Patricia Cox Miller, "Desert Asceticism and 'The Body from Nowhere'", in: *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), 137-153; id., *The Corporeal Imagination. Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity*, Philadelphia 2009, 72-74 on the construction of a perceptual prism through hagiographic texts that reduced individuality and placed the features of ascetics in patterns that combined OT models with the physiognomic culture of the time. Ascetics were presented as reproducing the lives of prophets, apostles, and Christ, thus continuing the mimetic chain that united contemporaneity with Jesus (cf. e.g. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Hist. Rel.* 20.2, ed. PG 82.1429-1432). This strategy allowed pilgrims to "contemplate Christ in every holy man" (Jerome, *Ep.* 108.14: Per singulos sanctos Christum se videre credebat [ed. PG 22.890; trans. Vladimir Ivanovici]).

bodies of ascetics were reified (sic!) and shared within the community of believers. Hair, garment items, handiwork, worms coming out of their wounds (!), or even their whole living selves were occasionally distributed to the brethren, testifying to the bodies becoming both living icons and living relics.⁵⁷ The most common manner in which these glorified individuals shared their presence was visual. Gazing upon the sanctified bodies of ascetics was supposed to replicate the experiences of Sinai and Tabor, their occasional glow testifying to the onlooker's own virtuous participation in such theophanic realities:

*A brother went to the cell of Abba Arsenius, in Scetis, looked in through the window, and beheld the elder wholly like fire [ὄλον ὡς πῦρ]; for the brother was worthy of seeing.*⁵⁸

About the Authors

Bogdan G. Bucur is Associate Professor of Theology at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, where he teaches and conducts research in the areas of reception history of the Bible and early Christianity. He is the author of *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Brill, 2009) and *Scripture Re-Envisioned: Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible* (Brill, 2018). He has also published a number of articles in journals such as *The Journal of Theological Studies*, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, *Vigiliae Christianae*, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, *Theological Studies*, *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, and *Journal of the Bible and its Reception*.

E-mail: Bucurb[at]duq.edu

Vladimir Ivanovici is lecturer at the Accademia di architettura di Mendrisio and postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Early Medieval Studies, Masaryk University, Brno. He studied ancient history and archaeology (BA, MA, PhD), before obtaining a PhD in art history from the Accademia di architettura di Mendrisio. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte in Rome and a summer fellow at the Dumbarton Oaks Library and Research Center in Washington, DC. He is the author of *Manipulating Theophany: Light and Ritual in North Adriatic Architecture (ca. 400–ca. 800)*, Berlin 2016 and of a number of articles. His research explores the various manners used to materialise the divine in Late Antiquity, with a focus on the living body as theophanic medium.

E-mail: vladimir.ivanovici[at]usi.ch

⁵⁷ Ascetics commonly gave hairs or personal items to pilgrims. Simeon Stylite the Elder even distributed the worms from one of his wounds, while Salamanes (Theodoret, *Hist. Rel.* 19.3, ed. PG 82.1428-1429) was disputed and repeatedly stolen by competing villages while still alive (we would like to thank Georgia Frank for this reference).

⁵⁸ *Apophthegmata Patrum*: Arsenius, 27 (ed. PG 65.96C; trans. Bogdan G. Bucur): Ἀδελφός τις ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ κελλίον τοῦ ἀββᾶ Ἀρσενίου ἐν Σκήτει, καὶ προσέσχε διὰ τῆς θυρίδος, καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν γέροντα ὄλον ὡς πῦρ ἦν δὲ ἄξιός ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ ἰδεῖν.

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