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FROM THE MYSTICAL *ΑΓΑΠΗ* THE INTELLECTUAL *AMOR / CARITAS*: THE TRANSFORMATION OF CONCEPTS IN THE BRIDAL MYSTICISM OF THE XII CENTURY

Background. *The article is mainly devoted to the conception of intellectual love in the tradition of the Bridal mysticism of the XII century. This investigation shows that theologia mystica of Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry and Richard of Saint-Victor was formed under the influence of the conception of a mystical agape and metaphorical language of the Song of Songs by the Fathers of the Church. Moreover, it was also stressed that the spiritual sources of intellectual love came from Augustine's Neoplatonic tradition. His work "The Trinity" made polysemantic caritas the central notion for the Bridal mystics in the XII century who used it to describe Divine and human love.*

Methods. *This investigation used a descriptive method to demonstrate the genesis of the concept of love in the tradition of the early Fathers of the Church and Bridal mystics of the XII century. It also applied textual analysis to explicate the conceptual link between different meanings of love in the works of the Bridal mystics.*

Results. *This study underlined that St. Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry and Richard of Saint-Victor worked out the conception of the intellectual love (amor / caritas) that is an extension of the concept of the mystical agape by the Fathers of the Church.*

Conclusion. *It was concluded that the Bridal mystics of the XII century often used notions of amor and caritas as synonyms in their texts when they wrote about recognising God through the perfect love – virtue charity or a strong love – amor fortis in the human soul. However, their concept of epistemic love: caritas intellectualis or amor rationalis also impacted the works of the Flemish and German mystics in the XIII-XIV centuries.*

Keywords: *Bridal mysticism, caritas, amor intellectualis, amor rationalis, agape, mystical theology.*

Background

The article focuses on the conceptual link between notions of agape and intellectual *caritas/amor* in the Bridal mysticism of the XII century.

This research consists of three parts. The first part is devoted to the spiritual sources that formed the Bridal language of the mysticism of the XII century. It takes into account the historical and philosophical investigation of "The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century" by Bernard McGinn, in which the author accentuates the meaning-creating role of images of the Bride and Groom in the Song of the Songs in the texts of Christian mystics since the V century.

The second part of the article deals with the genesis and the Latin translation of the Greek notion agape in the works of the Latin Fathers of the Church and St. Augustine based on the works "Knowledge, Love, and Ecstasy in the Theology of Thomas Gallus" by Boyd Taylor Coolman, also McGinn's work "The Foundation of Mysticism".

The third part analyses the meanings of notions *caritas* and *intelligentia amoris* in the Bridal tradition by William of Saint-Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux and Richard of Saint-Victor. It declares an important and leading role of the intellectual *caritas* or *amor* in the recognition of and unity with God. This part is grounded on research "Love. A Brief History through Western Christianity" by Carter Lindberg. It is also based on "A course in Christian mysticism" by Tomas Merton, "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries" by Bernard McGinn and "The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of St. Thierry" by David Bell.

Methods

This study was conducted by using the hermeneutics approach and comparative analysis of the texts by Fathers of the Church and William of Saint-Thierry, Bernard of Clairvaux and Richard of Saint-Victor.

Results

Spiritual sources. The *Bridal mysticism* of Cistercians Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry and Richard of Saint-Victor in the XII century is a type of Christian

theologia mystica or *contemplative theology*, derives from the early Fathers of the Church of the II–III centuries. But early Christian mysticism wasn't about the experience of God's presence. It was based on exegesis and the mystical presence of Christ in the Church. According to Bernard McGinn, the 'mystical' is a term that originated in paganism, but that had become a Christian possession by the second century. It was used to denote the hidden contemplation or even a mystical union with God in Christ, but was always "ecclesial" (McGinn, 1994, p. 184).

Most early mystics, like Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Dionysius, used Hellenic philosophy and mystical texts of Judaism to describe "a special access to God". This strong relationship between mysticism and exegesis lasted until the XII century.

The Bridal mysticism was also characterised by the allegorical reading of the Song of Songs. Images of the Bride and Groom, which symbolise spiritual marriage between the Church (or soul) and Christ, first have been provided in the early Greek Christian tradition of the II–VI centuries by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius. The Latin Christian tradition of the IV century in the face of Ambrose of Milan (mentor of Augustine) not only commented on the Song but also made reading of this book an inescapable part of Christian mysticism. Ambrose, in furtherance of Origen's ideas, united the description of individual Paul's rapture with the symbolism of the Song of Songs.

"Prince of the mystics" – Augustine, was an exception to the mystical tradition of the IV–V centuries. He avoided using the language of the Song in his works, which did not diminish his influence on the following mystics. The tradition of Ambrose was continued by Gregory the Great. Pope Gregory (at the turn of the VI–VII centuries), although following Augustine, went beyond his teacher's views and used the language of the Song in the description of unity between God – Divine Beloved and an individual human soul. The next wave of interest in the Song arose in the XI century in the works of Peter Damian and a series of works written in the style of the Song.

Cistercians Bernard of Clairvaux and his friend William of Saint-Thierry used the Song's language to emphasise the key role of *caritas* in the preparation for unity with God. Bernard of Clairvaux in his works "Sermons on the Song of Songs" and "On loving God" writes about the decisive role of the Divine grace and the *caritas* that restore faded *imago Dei* in the human soul (Bride) and direct it to the union with God (Groom) in the spirit, where two wills are in agreement. Such a loving union is the deification of the human soul, which becomes united with God. William of Saint-Thierry in his turn interprets the Song as a mystical text and comments on it in "Exposition on the Song of Songs". In this book, he finds and uses a lot of images of the restoring lost Godlikeness in the process of transforming the carnal love into the spiritual love.

The Bridal mysticism of the XII century, besides adopting the language of the Song, is characterised by the phenomenon of the *visio spiritualis* which is represented, for example, by Rupert of Deutz (visions in dreams) and Hildegard of Bingen (*lux vivens, excessus mentis*). They continued the tradition of using the language of the Song, but in the centre of their point of view, there is not so much exegesis of the Song as their spiritual feelings and experiences of God's presence.

The next stage of the Bridal mysticism was formed by the canons of Saint-Victor, particularly, Hugo and Richard. They combined the affective Song's language with the Dionysian tradition of mystical theology. The second wave of interest in Dionysianism arose in the XIII century by Thomas Gall (Thomas of Saint-Victor) in his texts "Commentaries on the Song of Songs" and "Mystical theology".

Mystical Αγάπη. Platonic and Neoplatonic notion "ἀγάπη" which is itself a translation from the Hebrew "ahav" becomes central in the early Christian tradition, mainly thanks to the apostles Paul and John; Origen and Dionysius. "In fact, to translate the Hebrew 'ahav', which is applied to the love of God, Christian authors initially adopted relatively new terms, either Greek ones like *agapē* (whereas *agapan* [ἀγαπᾶν] is older) rather than *erōs* or *philia*, or Latin ones such as *caritas* rather than *amor*. In Latin, they even invented *dilectio*, built on the older verb *diligere*" (Auvray-Assayas, & Cassin, 2014, p. 599). "*Agapē* was not a Christian creation, but it was a rare word until the early Greek-speaking Christians adopted it as the special designation for the love which God directs toward us and which we, through his grace, can in turn address to him" (McGinn, 1994, p. 72).

mystical love (ἀγάπη) to neighbour and participation in religious sacraments. Apostle John transformed Paul's formula "in Christ" into "ἐμοὶ μένων" ("in me remaining, dwelling") (John 14:10) (McGinn, 1994, p. 78). He emphasised that Christ is dwelling in all believers – "*en moi menein*".

In his turn, Origen equated Platonic ἔρωσ (Latin analogue "*amor*") and ἀγάπη. Real ἔρωσ, nudged away from the material world. Its spiritual force inside humans directs us to the Creator through the Logos (Christ). Origen was the first who interpreted the Song's images of the Bride and Groom as the route to God through love and charity. Pseudo-Dionysius continued Origen's conception and stressed on metaphysical meanings of ἔρωσ, which takes an active role in the human spiritual "journey upward" to the God or deification (Godlikeness). Also, God itself has been described as Αγάπη/ἔρωσ in Pseudo-Dionysius and Origen conceptions: "[...] the Greek fathers pioneered a new view of mystical love, one that was based on the love that the Saviour had implanted in the community and

therefore implied an active concern for others as much as a contemplative and erotic yearning for Christ" (McGinn, 1994, p. 185).

The intellectual amor / caritas. The tradition of the apostles and Greek fathers was carried on by Augustine. He developed the Latin concept of *caritas* as an analogue to ἀγάπη while *amor* "retains more of the Platonic sense of eros" (McGinn, 1991, p. 53). Carter Lindberg expands the definition of the *caritas* and stresses: "this old Latin word had a variety of senses: familial affection, friendship, sometimes patriotism. It took on the special sense of love of God and love of the neighbour for the Christians. At the same time, it took on a rich religious and ethical content due to the frequency of its use in the Latin Bible. Caritas expressed in the least imperfectly possible way the nature of God of which the essential attribute is love [...]" (Lindberg, 2008, p. 17).

For Augustine *caritas* is the root of all that is good (Lindberg, 2008, p. 59). It is the essence of God. Augustine echoed "*Deus Caritas est*" (1 John 4:8) in the work "On the Trinity": "Wherefore, if the Sacred Scripture proclaims: "God is love" [*Deus caritas est*] as also that love is of God and acts in us that we may remain in God and He in us, and we know this, because He has given us of His Spirit, then the Spirit Himself is the God who is love" (Augustine, 2002, p. 208).

Augustine's tradition of *caritas* as God "*per se*" (Christ and Trinity) has been reflected by the Bridal mysticism of Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry and Richard of Saint-Victor. Their *Unio mystica* is the core of Christian mysticism.

In their texts, polysemantic *caritas* are used to define both God's essence and the human soul. Tomas Merton underlines: "St. Bernard loved *Domina Caritas* ("Lady Charity") as St. Francis loved Lady Poverty. In the writings of the Cistercian Fathers of the twelfth century, the central place belongs to the teaching on the love of God, and on the perfect union of love between the soul and God" (Merton, 2017, p. 114).

Concerning God's essence, *Caritas* is the Divine love and co-love (*condilectio*) in the Trinity. Richard of Saint-Victor in the work "*De Trinitate*" calls God's love *supreme caritas* or fullness of love: "Now, it is necessary that supreme charity be altogether perfect. Yet in order it may be supremely perfect, just as it is necessary that it be so great that nothing greater can exist, so it is necessary that it be such that nothing better can exist" (Richard of St. Victor, 1979, p. 384). In later texts of Cistercians, this *supreme caritas* was named *amicitia* or the spiritual friendship (by Aelred of Rievaulx).

But the particular attention in the texts of Bridal mystics is given to the *caritas* as the Divine power or the bridal love in the human soul that influences the human faculty of intellect and will and prepares them for the union with God. As has been noted by Bernard McGinn, "the mystics spent much time analysing the respective roles of love and knowledge in the path to mystical interaction between notions of union and the ways in which love and knowledge relate to these both as means and as end" (McGinn, 1977, p. 7). In his turn, Tomas Merton pointed out that "we cannot [...] think that union with God can exist in a soul that has zeal without knowledge and discretion. Blind fervor and zeal are not the signs of a spouse united to the Word, for the Spirit of wisdom and understanding not only enkindles the fire of love but the light of knowledge [...]" (Merton, 2017, p. 127). Therefore, love as *affectus* – carnal love or feelings is a lower type of love than reasonable love.

Carnal love is an emotional love that opens the possibility of errors. Contrary to this kind of love there is a reasonable love which "must be guided and formed by *Scientia*, "knowledge". We must love God not only with our whole heart but with our whole mind" (Merton, 2017, p. 136).

Thus, according to Bernard of Clairvaux "[...] both love and knowledge were indispensable for union with God, however great love's priority remained" (McGinn, 1987, p. 203). He describes bridal love as wise (*sapiens*), prudent (*prudens*), reasonable (*rationalis*) and at the same time sweet (*dulcis*), violent (*vehemens*) (McGinn, 1987, p. 200).

It should also be mentioned that Bridal mystics of the XII century, such as Augustine, often used the notions "*amor*", "*caritas*" and "*dilectio*" as synonyms. In this manner, St. Bernard named the bridal love – *amor sapiens*. In his turn, William of Saint-Thierry used the notion *intellectus amoris* or *intelligentia amoris*. This tradition came from Gregory the Great who defines love as "*amor ipse notitia est*" – love itself is understanding (*Homelia in Evangelia* 27.4, PL 76, 1207 A). It emphasises the conjunction between love and reason/intellect/known during the mystical union with God. Reason is illuminated by love (*amor illuminatus*), and love is protected by Reason. It refers to the highest level of the presence of God – *amor intellectualis*.

Thus, William of Saint-Thierry echoes the formula of Gregory the Great that *Amor ipse intellectus est* in his work *Expositio Cantica* (X, 54: CCCM 87, 47): "Cognitio uero sponsae ad sponsum et amor idem est, quoniam in hac re amor ipse intellectus est". "But from the Bride to the Bridegroom, knowledge and love are all the same; for here love itself is understanding" (William of St. Thierry, 2010, p. 46). Thus, love is the kind of true knowing of God. As pointed out Jean-Marie Déchanet, William's concept of intellectual love was also indirectly influenced by Plotinus's ideas of two principles of knowledge: "the *voũs* which reasons (the intellectual or *animus* of William) and the *voũs* transported by love" (Déchanet, 2010, p. 48).

In addition to Plotinus's ideas, William followed Augustine's tradition. Therefore, the concept of *amor intellectuallis* is about the recognition of God through love: "Love is the key to the knowledge of God, and the more we love him, the more we know him" (Bell, 1984, p. 231). This knowing is also the Holy Spirit which is the image of the Divine love in the human soul. Thus, the second meaning of this phrase is that the Holy Spirit (Love – *caritas* as the bond inside the Trinity) itself is knowing. The third meaning is that the Holy Spirit gives grace to the human soul and enlightens it. Consequently, the transformative human soul can know God. It has the fruition of God (union, *unitas*, *adhaesio* with God). Genealogy of this concept refers to Plato's "οὐδέ τί μοι ἔστιν εὐρημα τοιοῦτον γεγονός τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς ἔκγονον" – "offspring born of my own soul" in *Theaetetus* 150d (Plato, 1921/2006, p. 34–35) and to the "fruition of the soul" of the spirituality of Augustine and John Scotus Erigena. Thus, Erigena in the work "*De contemplando Deo*" explains fruition (from Latin *fruor*, *fruition*, *fructus*) as a perfect love or enjoyment of union with God. McGinn stresses that William of Saint-Thierry in the "*De natura corporis et animae*" describes union with God as the seventh last step: "He, who enjoys it alone understands what are the joys and what is the fruition of the true and supreme good, what is the breath of peace" (McGinn, 1997, p. 150). Therefore, fruition is the offspring of our soul, which is genuine as the result of unity with God.

The conception of reasonable or intellectual love is also reflected in the Christian theory of virtues. Hence, *caritas* is

a human virtue of charity: love to God and neighbours. Bernard of Clairvaux interprets "*caritas* = love as *amplexus*, love rejoicing in union and wisdom, fruition, delight, praise, gratitude, fullness, fulfilment" (Merton, 1917, p. 114). In the work "*De diligendo Deo*" he states that *caritas* is "true and sincere charity, I say, must be said to proceed wholly from a pure heart, a good conscience, unfeigned (1 Timothy 1:5), by which we love our neighbour's good as our own" (Bernard of Clairvaux, 1987, p. 200). Intellectual *caritas* is the higher love: "The proper province of *amor rationalis* is the life of virtue and illumination. It takes care of good works and discretion. It loves "with all the vigilance and circumspection of your understanding". It no longer is content merely with "feeling" certain sentiments of devotion and love at the thought of Jesus suffering on the Cross, but it puts into effect good works which spring from the truth of Christ. It is marked by zeal for justice and truth, discipline of morals, sanctity of life. It is guided in all things by principles of faith and by the mind of the Church and not merely by human feelings, however sure and however right, for the mysteries of Christ" (Richard of St. Victor, 1979, p. 137).

Bridal mystics used the metaphor of the staircase or the upward ascension as the analogy of "Jacob's Ladder". Therefore, they wrote about the gradation of types of love. According to St. Bernard, after *amor rationalis* strong love or *amor fortis* comes, without which *amor rationalis* is imperfect and incomplete (Merton, 2017, p. 137). *Amore fortis* is the spiritual force in the human soul for all the "difficulties of life" (Merton, 2017, p. 137). Merton emphasised: "With this strong love the soul has not only fervor and light but constancy and ability to stand firm and resist evil in all its forms, not by our own power but by the power of God" (Richard of St. Victor, 1979, p. 137). This perfect kind of love is the spiritual gift or the Divine grace which is greater than all types of love. It brings spiritual perfection and makes possible mystical union with God.

Finally, Bridal mysticism of the XII century adopted the early Christian conception of mystical ἀγάπη/*caritas* and gave a new concept of the reasonable *caritas* or *amor intellectualis* as a spiritual instrument of recognising God. The tradition of Cistercians' ideas has been transformed and continued by the mystics of the next centuries. Especially by the mystics of the XIII centuries. Among them are: French theologian Thomas Gallus and his theory about love as *cognitio affectiva* that exceeds knowing (*intellectus*) and leads to the union with God and Flemish mystic Hadewijch and her conception of the human *Rede* (Reason) that leads to perfect *Minne/Karitate* (Love).

Discussion and conclusions

Researching the tradition of the Bridal mysticism of the XII century allowed us to trace the conceptual transformation of the notion of love from the mystical agape to the intellectual *caritas/amor*. Based on the texts of Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry and Richard of Saint-Victor, I explicate that Bridal mysticism underlines the value of both – love and knowledge in the way of union with God. Thus, this investigation sheds light on the reasonable side of union with God.

At the same time, this article demonstrates that Bridal mystics in the XII century, following the tradition of the Fathers of the Church and St. Augustine continued to use the bridal language from the Song of the Songs. But, their vocabulary portrays the mystical union between the individual human soul and Christ as a bridal ceremony between "Bride" and "Groom" (e.g., in the Bernardian texts), while in the tradition of the Fathers of the Church

"Bride" plays the role of the Church or Christian community. Thus, Bridal mystics emphasise the individual role of the human soul in knowing God.

The Bridal mysticism of the XII century absorbed the conception of the mystical agape and developed the concept of the importance of intellectual love. Hence intellectual love in the works of St. Bernard has been marked as *amor sapiens* or *amor rationalis*. William of Saint-Thierry preferred the notion of *intellectus amoris* or *intelligentia amoris* which is the synonym of the polysemantic notion of *caritas*, which denotes Divine and perfect human love. In his turn, Richard of Saint-Victor used the notion of *supreme caritas* to describe the highest type of mystical bridal love. Both concepts underline not only the unity between love and intellect but also indicate human love as the type of a true knowing God. Therefore, the Bridal mystics of the XII century were the predecessors and thought leaders for the mystics of the next centuries who continued to develop a theory of the leading role of intellectual love in the road to recognizing God.

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ВІД МІСТИЧНОГО АГАПН ДО ІНТЕЛЕКТУАЛЬНОГО AMOR/CARITAS: ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ КОНЦЕПТІВ ШЛЮБНОГО МІСТИЦИЗМУ XII СТОЛІТТЯ

Вступ. Присвячено концепції інтелектуальної любові в традиції шлюбного містицизму XII століття. Здійснено дослідження, яке унаочнює зв'язок між *theologia mystica* Бернарда Клервоського, Гійома із Сен-Тьєррі й Рішара Сен-Вікторського та концепцією містичного агапе ранніх отців Церкви, які використовували метафоричну мову Писань для описування містичного єднання з Богом. Підкреслено, що ідейним джерелом концепції інтелектуальної любові шлюбних містиків XII ст. був неоплатонізм Августина Аврелія, зокрема його трактат "Про Трійцю", завдяки якому полісемантичне поняття *caritas* стало центральним для традиції шлюбного містицизму та використовувалося як для позначення Божественної любові, так і для визначення вищого типу любові в душі людини – *caritas intellectualis*, а також його синоніму *amor rationalis*. Така розумна любов – *caritas / amor* є результатом гармонійної взаємодії любові та розумової здатності людської душі. Вона веде до містичного єднання з Богом та водночас є знанням / пізнанням Бога.

Методи. Використано дескриптивний метод для описування генези концепту любові в традиції ранніх отців церкви та шлюбного містицизму XII століття. Також дослідження було здійснено на основі текстурального аналізу робіт шлюбних містиків XII століття, що дозволило експлікувати концептуальний зв'язок між їхніми поняттями любові.

Результати. Обґрунтовано, що Бернард Клервоський, Гійом із Сен-Тьєррі та Рішар Сен-Вікторський сформулювали концепцію раціональної любові (*amore / caritas*), що є продовженням концепції містичного агапе ранніх отців церкви.

Висновки. Визначено, що шлюбний містицизм XII століття зазвичай еживає поняття *amor* та *caritas* як синоніми у своїх текстах для позначення пізнання Бога завдяки любові до ближнього, що є чесною та досконалим типом сильної любові *amor fortis* у душі людини. Концепт розумної любові – *caritas intellectualis* та *amor rationalis* був важливою смисловою компонентою *unio mystica* XII століття та став визначальною основою для фламандських та німецьких спекулятивних містиків XIII–XIV століть.

Ключові слова: шлюбний містицизм XII століття, розумна любов, *caritas intellectualis*, *amor rationalis*, містична теологія.

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