On the epistolography of Michael Glykas

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If Michael Glykas is well-known today, it is undoubtedly thanks primarily to the Βίβλος Χρονική, his 12th-century chronicle of events from the creation of the world to the death of Alexios I Komnenos (1118). Though the historical value of this work is somewhat undermined by the fact that all its main sources are basically known to us, the variety of the information it contains and the author’s extensive commentaries on the creation of the world and various events of Holy Writ have preserved a special place for the Βίβλος Χρονική in the framework of Middle Byzantine historiography.

Many questions concerning the identity and activity of Michael Glykas are still open to debate today. According to the epigram in the codex of the Klimadon Monastery that preserves his chronography, Glykas came from the island of Corfu and was at the height of his career during the

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Επιμέλεια έκδοσης: Στυλιανος Λαμπιάκης, IBE/EIE
reign of the emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180), whom he served as an imperial secretary. In addition, according to a bibliographical note in the codex Marcianus gr. 402, he lived until the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204. In the year 1159 he was sentenced to prison, and during his imprisonment in the Noumera of Constantinople he addressed at least two vernacular poems to Manuel I, begging for his release, as well as a collection of twenty proverbs. The reasons for Glykas’ incarceration are not known, as it is not clear yet whether his imprisonment and the following partial blinding were the result of his participation in Theodore Stypeiotes’ conspiracy against Manuel I Komnenos in the winter of 1158/1159, as O. Kresten proposed in 1978, or should be connected with Glykas’ severe criticism, in his Letter 40, of the emperor Manuel’s passion for astrology, as was initially suggested by F. Chalandon and later accepted by H.-G. Beck and H. Hunger. In any case, Glykas remained in prison until, probably, the year 1164, as it appears from his second poem to the emperor, pleading for his release, and it is presumed that not long afterwards he regained his freedom and assumed the monk’s habit. Despite being sentenced to blinding it appears that he was in a position to continue his work, and according to

4. Τσολάκης, Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι 11ου και 12ου αιώνα, 169.
6. [Ἀναγωγή δημοτικῶν τινων ῥητῶν], in: Κεφάλαια (as in note 12), v. I, ρζβ-ρσγ.’
7. Ο. Κριστέν, Zum Sturz des Theodoros Stypeiotes, JÖB 27 (1978) 49-103.
the prevailing view his chronicle and most – if not all – of his letters were composed after his release.\(^{10}\)

Compared to the Βίβλος Χρονική, the two vernacular poems addressed to Manuel I and to a certain degree the collection of proverbs, Michael Glykas’ epistolography is today the least studied part of his work. P. Magdalino referred briefly to Glykas’ letters in his monograph on the emperor Manuel I Komnenos, as did more recently A. Karpozilos, while acknowledging the need for an extended special study.\(^{11}\)

More specifically, Glykas’ epistolographic corpus consists of ninety-five texts of theological content, which cover a total of 967 pages in the old and unprocurable edition by Sophronios Eustratiadis\(^{12}\), a generally satisfactory edition with a rudimentary apparatus criticus and apparatus fontium, but no obvious evidence of manuscript misreading. The Byzantine text is accompanied by an extensive introduction, which is a significant contribution to the study of Glykas’ life and work, as it marks the first proposed identification of Michael Glykas with Michael Sikidites, the monk who in the late 12th century sparked the theological controversy on the corruptibility of the Eucharist.\(^{13}\) Furthermore, Eustratiadis’ edition also included Glykas’ two poems, his collection of proverbs and two texts directly relevant to Glykas’ life and work: a πιττάκιον of Manuel I, where the emperor defends his interest in astrology (Letter 40 is Glykas’ answer to that letter)\(^{14}\), and the twenty-seventh chapter of Nicetas Choniates’ Ἐθναιρόδοξον

\(^{10}\) See indicatively Karpozilos, Βυζαντινοὶ Ἱστορικοὶ καὶ Χρονογράφοι, 11ος-12ος αἰώνας, 586, 601.


\(^{13}\) On this matter see more in the following pages.

τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας, regarding the controversy that raged at the end of the 12th century over the corruptibility of the Eucharist.

The indisputably precious work of Eustratiadis suffers, however, from other problems in addition to the expected deficiencies of its time. I shall mention only the most obvious of these:

(I) Of the fifty-five manuscripts mentioned by the editor that preserve all or part of Glykas' epistolology under either his name or that of John Zonaras, Eustratiadis used only the seven codices (Paris. gr. 228 and Vind. theol. gr. 155, 13th c.; Marc. gr. 111, 14th c.; Vind. hist. gr. 28, Vind. theol. gr. 47, Vind. theol. gr. 67 and Vind. theol. gr. 83, 16th c.) that were accessible to him (five of them are held in the Austrian National Library in Vienna, where Eustratiadis served as deacon of the Orthodox Church), which in his estimation represent three successive revisions of the text. However, among the forty-eight manuscripts that for practical reasons the editor was not able to take into consideration, there are two basic codices of the manuscript tradition, the Athos Panteí. gr. 212 (13th c.) and the Mosq. 230 (= Mosq. Hist. Mus. Syn. gr. 219/230 Vlad., 1603), which preserve almost the whole of Glykas' epistolography. And now a third manuscript, unknown to Eustratiadis at the beginning of the 20th century, the codex Guelf. 73 Gud.


15. Τόμος εἰκοστὸς ἕβδομος. Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Χωνιάτου. Περὶ τοῦ δόγματος τῶν θείων μυστηρίων. Τὸ τοιοῦτον δόγμα ἐλαλήθη ἐπὶ τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ βασιλέως κυροῦ Ἀλεξίου τοῦ ἐξ Ἀγγέλων, ἐφ' οὗ καὶ ἡ ἅλωσις ἐγεγόνει τῆς πόλεως (Κεφάλαια, v. I, ριγ΄-ρλε΄).

16. On the rich and complex manuscript tradition of Glykas' epistolology see Кеφάλαια, v. I, 9οι-9λε’ and K. Krumbacher, Michael Glykas. Eine Skizze seiner Biographie und seiner litterarischen Tätigkeit nebst einem unediizierten Gedichte und Briefe desselben, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch –philologische Klasse 3 (1894) 399-400, where three additional manuscripts are mentioned.

17. In his review on Eustratiadis' edition Kurtz rejects the editor's assumption that Glykas himself was aware of the various editions of his letters [see E. Kurtz, review on Μιχαήλ τοῦ Γλυκᾶ, Εἰς τὰς ἀπορίας τῆς θείας Γραφῆς Κεφάλαια, ed. S. Eustatiadis, v. I, Athens 1906, in: BZ 17 (1908) 168].


19. See Kurtz's review, 167.
gr. (15th c.), which preserves ninety-one of Glykas’ letters, should be included among the best manuscripts of his work. Today, therefore, it is questionable whether Eustratiadis’ edition was based on the best manuscripts and thus many important issues as to the titles and the names of the addressees are still open to debate.

(II) The editor also admits that he was not always able to trace Glykas’ sources, for many of them were still unedited in his time. But even in the case of identified citations, quotation marks often open inside the text without ever closing and vice versa, which leaves the reader uncertain as to the exact beginning and end of a certain passage and, more importantly, whether Glykas copied the source texts faithfully or rephrased them from memory, a highly interesting distinction as regards his scholarship and method of composition.

(III) In the titles of Letters 86, 87 and 88 the recipient’s name is replaced by the phrase Τῷ αὐτῷ, which is unsatisfactory since no addressee is specified in either of the two preceding letters (Letters 85 and 84), and while Letter 83 is indeed explicitly addressed to the monk Alypios, to me that is insufficient evidence for accepting Eustratiadis’ assumption that Alypios was also the intended recipient of Letters 86, 87 and 88. Given, moreover, that these three letters are preserved in the same order in the main codices of Eustratiadis’ edition, a parallel study of the whole manuscript tradition is essential.

To sum up, despite the fact that Eustratiadis’ edition seems to reproduce Glykas’ text adequately and therefore permits a fairly safe study of his epistolographic work, it cannot be considered as the final edition. On the contrary, the need for a new modern edition of the text that takes into account the entire rich manuscript tradition, especially in reference to issues connected with the arrangement of the letters in the corpus, their superscriptions and the names of the recipients, is imperative.

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By far the largest group of these ninety-five letters correspond to the title of Eustratiadis’ edition (Μιχαὴλ τοῦ Γλυκᾶ, Εἰς τὰς ἀπορίας τῆς θείας Γραφῆς Κεφάλαια), for they aim at providing persuasive answers to various theological issues that derive from the reading of the Old and New Testaments or arise in the daily lives of monks and ordinary faithful Christians. Thus, without ignoring the major controversial theological issues of the day (azymes, filioque, о πατήρ μου μείζων μου ἐστι, corruptibility).

27. Letter 29.
29. Letter 79.
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of the Eucharist\textsuperscript{30}), Michael Glykas’ epistolography mainly concerns the logical questions of ordinary Christians about life, death, sin and salvation after death, that arise as a result of certain obscurities and contradictions in the context of formal Church teaching. Glykas endeavours to solve these problems with the help of his deep knowledge of the ecclesiastical sources, interpreting them with a strong dose of common sense and good will. This is the main feature common to all his letters, which also display several similar principles of composition: for example, the subject of each letter is defined at the outset, often in a cautiously written preface, after which Glykas begins to develop his argument, quoting extensively, and chiefly, from Christian literature\textsuperscript{31} and sometimes from various secular Byzantine sources as well\textsuperscript{32}.

\textsuperscript{30} Letter 59 \textsuperscript{31} See for example Letter 8: \textsuperscript{32} For example in his Letter 56 (Τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρίῳ Ἰωαννικίῳ τῷ Γραμματικῷ. Ἀπολογητικὸν ἐκ μέρους πρὸς τὸν μοναχὸν ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀποκαλέσαντα κακοδόξους ἡμᾶς, ἐπειδὴ λέγομεν ὅτι ὁ τῆς προθέσεως ἄρτος τοιοῦτός ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν, ὁποία ἦν ἡ ἁγία τοῦ Χριστοῦ σὰρξ ἡ ἐπὶ τοῦ μυστικοῦ δείπνου τοῖς μαθηταῖς εἰς βρῶσιν δοθεῖσα (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 348-379).

31. See for example Letter 8: Εἴπ’ οἷς ἡμῖν ἀμηχανία καὶ μικρὸς καὶ μέγας, οὐ μικρὸς καὶ μέγας, οὐ μέλας καὶ ξανθός, οὐ διάφορα πρόσωπα τε καὶ σχήματα

32. For example in his Letter 56 (Τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρίῳ Νεκταρίῳ. Περὶ τοῦ Ἰούδα εἴτε τῇ ἀγχόνῃ ἐναπέψυξε, κατὰ τὴν εὐαγγελικὴν ἱστορίαν, εἴτε μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπιζήσας, ὡς φασί τινες, ὑδέρῳ περιέπεσε καὶ οὕτω τὸ τοῦ βίου τέλος ἐδέξατο... (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 89,5-12).
Every time Glykas adds a new argument, citing the relevant passages, he also repeats his basic thesis (several repetitions of this kind can be traced in the text, especially in the longer letters)\textsuperscript{33}. In addition, there are also continuously interjected forms of address to the correspondents (\textit{ἀνθρωπε τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀγαπητέ, θεοείκελε ἄνερ, ἡγασµεῖνε μοι πάτερ, ἄδελφε, ὑσιτάτα ἄνερ, θεία καὶ ἱερὰ κεφαλή, τιμία καὶ ἱερὰ κεφαλὴ etc.})\textsuperscript{34}, as well as exhortations to them not to let their thoughts stray (\textit{μὴ θορυβοῦ, μὴ τοῖς ἐνθὲν νάκαθηθεν εὐφροσυµένοις καὶ ἀλλ’ ἀπανοµοῦσα διηγεῖσθαι τοῦ λόγου etc.}) and to be totally persuaded by his arguments (\textit{μὴ οὖν ἐπὶ πλέον ἀµφίσπαλλε, μὴ ἀπίστει τοῖς λε¬γοµένοις etc.}). These set phrases and many others (\textit{δὸς ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀπόκρισιν, οὔµενον πάντως οὔµενον, ἀµῆχανον πάντως ἀµῆχανον etc.}) are constantly repeated in different letters, reinforcing the sense of unity of the epistolographic corpus. The letters usually conclude with a short epilogue, where Glykas restates his basic thesis, encouraging his correspondent to adopt it in the name of God. At this particular point in his letters he frequently refers to the illness that prevents him from continuing his writing (\textit{Ἀρκεῖ τοσαῦτα· ἡ γὰρ τρύχουσα νόσος πλείω λέγειν οὐ συγχωρεῖ})\textsuperscript{35}, most probably implying the health problems due to his partial blindness.

The most prominent feature of Glykas’ epistolography, however, is the continuous citation of selected excerpts from Byzantine ecclesiastical and secular sources, most of the time direct (i.e. with acknowledgement of the author and sometimes the title of the work followed by the specific passage either copied verbatim or paraphrased), on rare occasions allusive (i.e. a whole passage or single phrase taken from an obviously specific source).

\textsuperscript{33} See indicatively \textit{Καὶ εἴγε μὴ βαρύνῃ τὰς ἀκοὰς, μικρὸν ἐπαναλήψομαί σοι τὸν λόγον (Letter 8, Κεφάλαια, v. Ι, 113,16-17); Εἰ βούλει δὲ καὶ αὖθις ἐπαναλήψομαι τὸν λόγον (Letter 84, Κεφάλαια, v. ΙΙ, 372,11) etc.

\textsuperscript{34} For the typical forms of address in Byzantine epistolography, including the letters of Glykas, see M. Grünbart, \textit{Formen der Anrede im byzantinischen Brief vom 6. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert}, [WBS 25], Wien 2005.


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without, however, naming either the source or its author). Recording and studying all these passages in relation to those embodied in the Βίβλος Χρονική and to a minor degree the two vernacular poems is expected to complete our knowledge of Glykas’ education and reading interests, that is, which texts he had studied and how he had evaluated, interpreted and, finally, used them in the context of his work – in other words his own method of letter writing. The systematic citation of certain excerpts or groups of excerpts in similar contexts in different letters indicates that Glykas based his argumentation concerning specific issues on specific texts and in the same circumstances was able to recall them verbatim (either the texts themselves or his paraphrase of them) and often in the same order. It would therefore seem logical to assume that Glykas had arranged his own corpus of theological notes, which he consulted for his letters – and why not for his chronicle as well? Apart from this, his perception of Christian literature is clear and often repeated: one should read the Holy Scriptures carefully and receptively, always interpreting them with the help of common sense. Glykas himself often tries to explain their various contradictions by enriching his argumentation with philological commentary.


37. See for example Letter 11: μηδὲ κατὰ τό γράμμα μόνον ἔπερχον τὰ θεῖα ὅρια. Ὅφει γὰρ νοοῦν τοὺς παθῶντες, εἰς λογισμὸς ἀτόπους ἐξεκυλίσθησαν. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐννοοῦντες εἶναι τὸν Θεὸν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐδογμάτισαν· ἕτεροι δὲ καὶ τὰ θηρία νοερὰ νοερὰς καὶ τοὺς ἰχθύας εὐλογοῦντος … (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 145,10-18); Σὐ δὲ μὴ παραδεινοκαθ’ ἡμᾶς τὴν θείαν ἐπέρχον Λαμπρῆν, μηδὲ τοῖς μὲν τὸν διδασκαλόν προσέχον ἔμφοβον, τοῖς δὲ παροράν ἀπερισκέπτως καὶ ἀποστρέφεσθαι,—τοῦτο γὰρ ὅτι ἄκοφονον— ἀλλὰ πάντας ὡς ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ὑποβρυχήσαν καὶ τοὺς θηρίας καταρρημότατας καὶ τοὺς ἱχθυᾶς εὐλογοῦντος … Κεφάλαια, v. I, 147,10-17).

38. See indicatively Letter 29 (Τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρίῳ Μαξίμῳ τῷ Σμενιώτῃ. Ἐι χρή προσέχειν τοῖς λέγουσιν, ὅτι λαβὼν ὁ Χριστὸς ἄζυμον ἐν τῇ ἑσπέρᾳ τῆς μεγάλης Νεκροτομίας τῶν Ἀνάγλυφων ἐξυπηρέτησεν τὸν ἅγιον Παύλον ἀθάνατον ἑκάστῳ καὶ τούς πάντας μηχανώμενοι, οἰκονομικῶς τοῖς πράγμασι μετεφέροντο … (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 147,10-17).
As a result, however, of his constant citations of other sources, most of Glykas’ letters extend to numerous pages, despite the well-known precept that letters should be brief. This is disorienting to the modern scholar, who is somewhat puzzled as to their genre: are they indeed letters or may they be considered as theological speeches/treatises in epistolary form? The term “theological chapters” (obviously following the title of the modern edition) that often appears, without further clarification, in the limited secondary bibliography on Michael Glykas’ epistolography is to me not particularly helpful in this regard.

It is undeniable that sixty-nine of the ninety-five texts comprising Glykas’ corpus have the basic external features of a letter: the recipient’s name is superscribed, the body of the letter contains repeated forms of address to him, stating his profession and often indicating Glykas’ connection with him, while there are, moreover, a preface and a rather standard epilogue, written all in simple but definitely careful language. On the other hand, regardless of how strange such a systematic quoting of other texts in the context of a letter may seem to be, this method of writing is perfectly suited to Glykas’ obvious aim: to explain to the recipients of his texts as comprehensibly and convincingly as possible all the issues they are interested in, most likely taking into consideration their level of education and

Πέμπτης ὡς καὶ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα τηνικαῦτα δῆθεν ἑστηκυίας τὸ οἰκεῖον πάσχα ἐτέλεσεν: εἴ γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεηγόρος Λουκᾶς οὐκ εὐπαράδεκτα δοκεῖ τὰ προειρημένα ποιεῖ—ὁλθὲ, λέγων, ἡ ἤμερα τῶν ἀζύμων ἡ καλουμένη πάσχα, ἐν ᾗ ἐδεῖ τὸ πάσχα θύεσθαι—ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐπὶ τοῦτο σε διαταράσσεται χρή. Τὸ γὰρ ἴδιον ἐνταῦθα, θεοείκελε ἄνερ, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐγγύς ἢν, ἐπὶ θυράς ἢν, ὁ διαλαμβάνεις ἑνόψεις θείου πατήρ. Ὅθεν καὶ καλὸς τὸν τῶν ἀζύμων ἴδεν, ἐπὶ θύρας ἐγγίζουσαν, ἔδεικτα ὁ μακάριος διαλεγόμενος ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐπὶ τούτῳ σε διαταράσσεται χρή. Τὸ γὰρ ἐγγύς ἢν, ἐπὶ θύραις ἢν, ὁ διαλαμβάνεις ἑνόψεις θείου πατήρ. Ὅθεν καὶ καλῶς τὴν τῶν ἀζύμων ἴδεν, ἐπὶ θύρας ἐγγίζουσαν, ἔδεικτα ὁ μακάριος διαλεγόμενος ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐπὶ τούτῳ σε διαταράσσεται χρή. Τὸ γὰρ ἐγγύς ἢν, ἐπὶ θύραις ἢν, ὁ διαλαμβάνεις ἑνόψεις θείου πατήρ.

39. See Τομαδάκης, Βυζαντινή Ἐπιστολογραφία, 89-94.
familiarity with the relevant texts\textsuperscript{41}, as well as their often limited access to most of them, for the recipients were usually simple monks\textsuperscript{42}. If one accepts the assumption that Glykas’ writings are basically letters, the next logical question is whether these are philological-didactic letters\textsuperscript{43}, namely texts written without necessarily a direct cause but intended later to be gathered into a single corpus, or whether they are private-philological letters that were composed for a specific reason and later incorporated into a broader corpus. Those of Glykas’ letters that bear their recipients’ names seem to belong to the second category, for they reply to a former letter\textsuperscript{44} or discussion\textsuperscript{45}. It also appears that Glykas maintained correspondence, or at least had frequent personal contacts, with most of his letters’ recipients, as a result of which the preserved texts were composed. In several cases Glykas states that he is actually writing a letter\textsuperscript{46} or that there will be soon a second letter on the

\textsuperscript{41} There is a sense that Glykas cites many more passages with specific references in letters he addresses to educated correspondents. See for example Letter 52 Τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρίῳ Λεοντίῳ τῷ ἐγκλείστῳ. Εἰ χρὴ προσέχειν τοῖς λέγουσιν ὅτι μετανοίᾳ περὶ τὸ τέλος ὁ Σολομὼν ἐχρήσατο (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 69-77), for whom Glykas says πολυμαθῆ τε ἄνδρα ὄντα καὶ πεῖραν οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν ἐσχηκότα τῷ χρόνῳ (69,13-14).

\textsuperscript{42} On the profile of Glykas’ correspondents see more in the following pages.

\textsuperscript{43} See Hunger, Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur, I, 204.

\textsuperscript{44} See Letter 5: Εἰ δὲ καὶ τοῦτο μαθεῖν ἐπιζητεῖς, ὁσιώτατε ἄνερ … (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 61,6); Letter 29: Ὅ περὶ τῶν ἀζύμων λόγος, ὁ θεία καὶ ιερὰ κεφαλῆ, καὶ πολλῶς ἔθησαι πρότερον καὶ πολλῆς ἐξαταχθήσατο μυθοτητικόν τι καὶ ψηλότερον … Ἐξείται τούτων ἀνάγνωσθαι καὶ τῇ γλώσσῃ ἠκονήμην ἐξείταις ὑπὲρ μάχαιραν διότι τῶν τούτων οὐ κεφαλῆς ἀποτείνησαν … Αλλ’ ἔπειτ’ ἔμεν τοῖς ἐτερτίων ἔχαρις ἔχαρις τοιούτων καὶ ἀλλήλων ἀνάγκης τῆς τούτων ἀνάγκης τε καὶ ἀλλήλων ἀνάγκης (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 293,8-294,8) etc.

\textsuperscript{45} See for example Letter 47: Καὶ σήμερον ἐρωτηθέντες παρὰ τῆς σῆς ὁσιότητος, εἰ καταλύειν ἐν κρέατι συγχωρούμεθα παρεμπιπτούσης ἐν ἡμέρᾳ Τετράδι τύχῃ ἢ Παρασκευῆ τῆς ἁγίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ Γεννήσεως, ἢ καὶ ἑτέρας οἵς ἡμῶν ἀκροποτικῆς πανηγύρεως, τοιαύτην ἐπιφέρομεν, εἰ καὶ ἀμαθεῖς ἔσομεν, τὴν ἀπόκρισιν (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 37,6-10).

\textsuperscript{46} See Letter 54: Καὶ τάσσατε μὲν εἰς τοσοῦτον, ὁ θειώτατε ἄνερ, ὅτι μηδ’ ἐπὶ πλέον ἐσχήκησιν τὸ ἱερὸν ἐπεξεργάσασθαι γράμμα τῆς θεοφιλίας σου ὁμοίως τοῖς ἀντιδίκων οὐ μικρὰ ἡμῖν καὶ χαμαὶ συνριμένεις φέροντες φρόνημα, πῶς ἐνθυλώτερον ἀνόμλεια νοημάτων; (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 107,10-13).

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In addition to these particular points, if one reads in parallel Glykas’ letters to different people on the same topic, small differences in the analysis may be detected, tailored to the particular recipient, his education, his emotional condition, and even his personal relationship with Glykas.

The most characteristic example is of course his consolatory Letter 57 Τῇ περιποθήτῳ ἀνεψιᾷ τοῦ κραταιοῦ καὶ ἁγίου ἡμῶν αὐθέντου καὶ βασιλέως κυρία θεοδώρῳ ἄθυμούσῃ σφόδρα καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀπογινωσκούσῃ σωτηρίαν δι’ ὅν ἔτολμησε φόνον ἐπί τινι γυναικὶ ξηλοτυπίας ἐνεκεν⁴⁸, whose content is totally adapted to the particular case, as Glykas dwells on examples of Byzantine emperors involved in murders (John Tzimiskes, Theodosios, Maurikios) with the rationale that he is comforting a member of the imperial family, who may reasonably find the consolation more readily in the similar experience of former emperors. Equally interesting, however, is Letter 81, addressed to a beloved correspondent⁴⁹ (Τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρίῳ Ἰωαννικίῳ τῷ Γραμματικῷ) on the question Εἰ χρὴ προσέχειν τοῖς λέγουσιν ὅτι οὐκ ἔξεστι καταλύειν ἔν γε Τετράδι καὶ Παρασκευῇ τὰ τῆς νηστείας, εἰ καὶ τύχῃ συμπεσεῖν αὐτὰς οἰανδήποτε δεσποτικὴν ἑορτήν). In its epilogue Glykas says that if the monks (of Ioannikios’ monastery in particular?) wish to be proven φιλάδελφοι μᾶλλον εἶναι καὶ φαίνεσθαι ή φίλαυτοι, they should allow those among them who for health reasons are unable to remain totally without food until the ninth hour⁵⁰ to have a light


⁴⁹. Five letters of Glykas’ epistolographic corpus are addressed to him (Letters 78, 81, 84, 90, 94). It is obvious that there was a correspondence between the two men; see for example the prologue of Letter 81: Ὅτι μὲν οὖν, ὁσιώτατε ἄνερ, ἐν νηστείᾳ διαγένει ὁ πιστὸς ὄρθος ἐν τῷ Τετράδι καὶ Παρασκευῇ, σύμφωνα τούτῳ καὶ ὅν ἀναλήγμα τοῦ ἔπιστροφομένου ἂν ἡ παρὰ τῆς οὐδόπτης… (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 322,7-10).

⁵⁰. Πολλοὶ γὰρ οὐ καὶ δοκοῦσι κατά τὸ φαινόμενον ὑγιῶς ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ τοσοῦτον ἀντιλέγονται ὡς διά ἀπογινωσκούσιν σωμάτα φέροντων, ὅστε καὶ τῇ τυχούσῃ προφάσει μετατρέψοντας ταύτα καὶ μετατρέποντας.
meal, as was probably the case with Ioannikios himself. Nevertheless, the fact that Glykas appears elsewhere to adopt a rather stricter approach to the Wednesday and Friday fasts shows that not all of his letters are equally impersonally didactic, but display shades of thought connected apparently with the situation of his correspondents. To me, therefore, Glykas seems for the most part to have written original letters in real circumstances, replying to specific questions from specific people who apparently admired him and respected his theological education. He later gathered and revised all these letters in order to compile a handbook of popular theology, which is what his collection of letters actually is. In this context he must have formed the standardized superscription to each letter, naming it as κεφάλαιον of his book.

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51. I assume that the initial reason of Ioannikios’ letter to Glykas was his disagreement with his monastery on how strictly one should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays; see Εἰ δὲ ταῦτα τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τρόπον, ἐπὶ τῇ γενεθλίῳ λοιπὴν ἡμέρα τοῦ λυτρωτοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τί χρὴ καὶ λέγειν; ἐπειδὴ Τετράδι τῆς ἑβδομάδος ἡμέρᾳ συμπεσεῖν ἀυτὴν ὡς ὁρᾷς φυλάξομεν; ἆρα τὰ τῆς ἐνάτης ἐπ’ αὐτῇ καὶ ἐν νηστείᾳ διατελέσομεν, εἰ καὶ δοκεῖ τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ἡμῶν; οὐκ ἔγωγε οἶμαι (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 332,3-8).

52. See indicatively Letter 46 Τὸ τιμιωτάτον μοναχὸν κυρίῳ Μελετίῳ τῷ Κριτοπούλῳ. Εἰ χρὴ προσέχειν τοῖς λέγουσιν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐπάναγκες ἡμῖν τὸ ἐν Τετραδοπαρασκευαῖς νηστεύειν, τοῦ Κυρίου λέγοντος ὅτι οὐ τὰ εἰσερχόμενα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐξερχόμενα (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 30-36), the single letter that Glykas addresses to him.

and adding the name of its recipient and a synopsis of its content. At this point, too, he must have incorporated the few internal references between different chapters, while he could have also deleted the most personal references in his letters – if there ever were such –, keeping only the frequent allusions to his illness.

This sense of Glykas’ care for the composition of his epistolographic corpus is therefore to a point undermined by some basic issues in its organisation: for example, the fact that entire passages are repeated verbatim in different chapters, or even more that the criterion for the classification of the letters is unclear, since they are arranged neither by content or by recipient while it is also difficult to confirm the possibility of a chronological classification, customary in most Byzantine collections of letters, for only a few of Glykas’ letters contain chronological indicators.

As I intend to examine the problems of dating Glykas’ epistolography in a separate article, here I shall refer only to two highly interesting passages: (I) the epilogue of Letter 16 (Τῷ αὐτῷ – i.e. τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρίῳ Ἡσαΐᾳ –. Περὶ τοῦ πῶς δεῖ πρὸς Ἰουδαίους ἀπαντᾶν, ἡνίκα καὶ μάλλον ἐκείνοι τὸ κατά Χριστὸν ἐπιχειροῦσα διαστρέφειν μυστήριον) and (II) the prologue of Letter 43 (Τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρίῳ Ὀνουφρίῳ. Περὶ τῆς τετραμόρφου ὀπτασίας ἣν ὁ προφήτης εἶδεν Ἰεζεκιήλ, καὶ ὡς αὐτὴν εἰς τοὺς τέσσαρας Εὐαγγελιστὰς ἔξελάβοντο).

Passage I

Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν εἰς τοσοῦτον, ὦ θειότατε ἄνερ, ὅτι μηδὲ πλείω γράφειν ἵσχύομεν, πολλοῖς, ὡς οἶδε Κύριος, ἀθυμίας βελέμνοις κατακεντούμενοι.

54. With the exception of Letter 57: the information in its title that Theodora committed a murder does not ensue from the letter itself.

55. Except from Letter 59 (see above note 53) see also Letter 21 (ὁς ὁ λόγος ἐν τοῖς ἐμποροῦσιν ἔδειξεν (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 248,23; namely in Letters 8 and 9) and Letter 91 (εἰ βοθεῖτε, κεφάλαιον ἀνάγνωσθε τὸ ὄγδοο γεγονότων καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖσε τὸν περὶ τοῦτον λόγον εὐφημείς πλατύτερον ὁμιοῦ καὶ σαφέστερον (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 417,2-4).

56. New evidence may come up from the study of the whole manuscript tradition, though such a prospect does not emerge in the relevant reports of Kurtz (review, 168-169) and recently Aviškina (Theological Chapters, 158).

57. See Krumbacher, Michael Glykas, 441 and Kurtz, review, 168-169.

58. This is the reason why Eustratiadis speaks about the corpus’ random arrangement. See more in Κεφάλαια, v. I, νε´-ξζ´ and πο´-το´ for the Letters 3, 4, 16, 23, 40, 53, 57, 59, 61, 79, 84 and 98.
ON THE EPISTOLOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL GLYKAS

Καὶ εἰ μὴ τὰς ἱερὰς βίβλους ἀνὰ χεῖρας εἶχομεν κἂντεῦθεν οὐ μικρὰν ἐτρυγῶμεν ἀνάψυξιν, τάχα ἂν ἀγχόνη χρησάμενοι καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ζῆν κακῶς ἀπηλλάγημεν...

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Passage II

"Εδει μὲν ἡμᾶς, ἀδελφὲ Ὀνούφριε, οἷς καὶ μᾶλλον γωνία καὶ σκότος τὸ ἐπιτίμιον, ἐγγωνιάζειν ἀεὶ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς καὶ συστέλλεσθαι καὶ τοὺς ἐν Σερίψῳ βατράχους παντελεί ἄφωνια κατέχεσθαι. Εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι τῆς καταφύγουσαν σπουδής καὶ ἀφωνίας ἐπιλανθάνονται καὶ ἄφωνοι γίνονται τέλεον, ὅτε τὴς τῶν ἐκεῖσε ἐπιλανθανόμενος ἀφωνίας, καθά τις τῶν τῆς ἀθυμίας ὑπερήφανος καὶ νεκρῶν ἀμεινὸν οὐδὲν διακείμενοι.

Why are these passages important? Because in a letter collection totally devoid of personal references, the presence of these two passages and their clear confession of Glykas’ poor psychological state is highly surprising. At the same time, we should also bear in mind that this explicit statement of ἀθυμία (the word appears in both these letters), which would have led Glykas even to contemplate death, did he not find consolation to his books, comes from the mouth of a monk, since according to the prevailing view these letters were written after his release from prison, when he had adopted the monastic habit. The same atmosphere, however, in a similar context of darkness and isolation, is described in detail in Glykas’ first vernacular poem from prison. If these two letters exude the same atmosphere of prison, which is vividly depicted in the two vernacular poems, and were therefore written during his incarceration, a new perspective on Glykas’ life opens up, as they may indicate that Glykas had some theological education and renown even at that time, both of which were enhanced over the following years (more correspondents, deeper knowledge of the ecclesiastical texts, discussion of more difficult theological issues, etc.).

60. Κεφάλαια, v. II, 12,6-13.
61. See indicatively Ο δὲ βληθεὶς ἐν φυλακῇ πλήρει καπνοῦ καὶ σκότους / ἔχει τοὺς πόνους μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ πάντοτε συνοικοῦντας (Στίχοι οὓς ἔγραψε καθ’ ὃν κατεσχέθη καιρόν, ed. Τσολάκη, lines 109-110); βλέπετε, ἑκατέρες με ἡ χολὴ, τῷ τὸ λαλῶν οὐκ ἐξεύρω / ἔβρασεν ἡ καρδία μου, παρέκει οὐδὲν βαστάζω / νὰ δώσω εἰς πέτραν καὶ λυθῶ, νὰ ποίσω θέαμα μέγα, / ἀπὸ στενοχωρίας μου νὰ πνίξω τὸν ἑαυτόν μου· (lines 285-288); Ὅπου δεσμὰ καὶ κάκωσις καὶ νέφος ἀθυμίας (line 326). See additionally [Ἀναγωγὴ δημοτικῶν τινων ῥητῶν], ed. S. Ευστρατίδης, no 16, line 350 καὶ μηδὲ ζῆν νομίσαντες κείμενον ἐν γωνίᾳ.
An equally important issue, however, as far as the structure of Glykas’ epistolographic corpus is concerned, is the fact that interspersed among the sixty-nine chapters addressed to specific recipients there are also twenty-six others, mostly short and of various content, with no recipient named on their superscription and only the subject stated, usually after the opening phrase Ἐτι καὶ τούτο ἠπόρηται. The forms of address in most of these letters do not help us identify their recipients, presupposed merely by the common second-person verbal phrases present here as in the other chapters. On the other hand, many of these texts close with Glykas’ customary reference to his illness or a similar excuse for his short treatment of the topic. In short, with the exception of the absence of the recipient’s name and their somewhat different titles, these texts are harmoniously incorporated into Glykas’ corpus as far as their composition, content and language are concerned; and the question that naturally arises is whether they are actually letters, from the manuscript tradition of which the recipients’ names were simply at some point omitted, or separate treatises that Glykas added later with a view to completing his theological handbook by covering issues that had not been raised by his correspondents but which he wished to analyse in a broader theological work. It is indeed a fact that several of these chapters deal with topics not treated elsewhere; there are, however, also those which

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62. Letters 12, 14, 17, 18, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 41, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 66, 67, 85, 89, 92 (?), 93, 96, 97, 98.
63. See for example Letter 14 Ἐτι καὶ τούτο ἠπόρηται, εἰ κατὰ τὴν πρώτην ἡμέραν παρήγαγε τὸ φῶς ὁ Θεός, τίνος ἔνεκεν κατὰ τὴν τετάρτην τοὺς φωστῆρας ἐδημιούργησεν (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 167,2-4).
67. See for example Letter 85: Ἀρκεῖ τοσαῦτα· πλείω καὶ γὰρ ὁ καιρὸς περὶ τούτου λέγειν οὐ συγχωρεῖ (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 134,14-15) etc.
68. See Letter 18 Ἐπεξήγησις τῶν ἐν τῷ θείῳ τελουμένων λουτρῶν (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 222-224) or Letter 64 Καὶ τούτο πρὸς τοῖς άλλοις ἠπόρητα, εἰ κατὰ πάντα καιρὸν συναφείς ἱεροθέηται τοῖς ὁμοζύγοις οὐκ ἔξεστιν (Κεφάλαια, v. II, 175-179).
repeat issues already presented, possibly better and more extensively, in another letter⁶⁹. Chapter 12, the only one in Glykas’ corpus that corresponds to its title’s question⁷⁰, may also be the only text for which we can assume with relevant certainty that its initial version was a rhetorical speech and not a letter, for Glykas declares from its beginning that he is recording the oral answer he gave in person to a question τοῦ κραταιοῦ καὶ ἁγίου ἣμῶν βασιλέως⁷¹, while the emperor’s reaction is described in the end of the text⁷². The above-mentioned evidence in connection with the absence of any form of address in Chapter 12 reinforces the assumption that the rest of the chapters in this category had initially been letters. This matter, however, needs further study on the basis also of the entire manuscript tradition.

Based on the other sixty-nine letters that name their recipents, we can say that Glykas had a circle of twenty-six correspondents. The great majority are monks, whose identification is rather difficult since most of them are mentioned in the titles of the letters by their first names alone (Alypios, Barlaam, Esaias, presumably a second Esaias⁷³), Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos, Leontios, Neilos.


⁷⁰. Τίνος ἐνεκεν ἐν ἐσχάτοις καίρων ἐκαρκώθη ὁ Κύριος καὶ διατεὶ μὴ πολλῷ προτέρου εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλήλυθε καὶ γὰρ εἰ προλαβοῦν ἐποίησε τὸ τούτο, οὐκ ἐν ἄγνοια ὁ ἀποφθεγμάτις ἐκεῖνος λαὸς ἐν ἀσεβείᾳ κατέλυσε τὴν ζωήν (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 150-154).

⁷¹. Καὶ τοῦτο τοῦ κραταιοῦ καὶ ἁγίου ἣμων βασιλέως ἐπαποροῦντοι οὕτω καὶ λέγοντο· ἐὰν ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου γέγονεν ἐνανθρώπησι, διά τι οὐ πρῶτον εἶναι ἐπέστρεψαν τὸν Κύριον, δόκιμο δὲ ἄγνοιαν ἐν ἀσεβείᾳ τὸν βίον κατέστρεψαν; τοιαύτην ἐπιγνώσατε καὶ αὐτού ἐκείνου τὴν ἀπόκρισιν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀπόκρισιν ἐποιήσατε (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 150,7-12). Glykas obviously refers to Manuel I Komnenos even though he does not name him (see also Letter 40 Ἀνταπολογητικὸν ἐπὶ τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρῷ Ἠσαΐᾳ (Letters 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 47, 51 and 65 indicate a close relation and frequent correspondence between the two men) and the three shorter ones Ἀνταπολογητικὸν ἐπὶ τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρῷ Ἠσαΐᾳ (Letters 20, 21 and 24). Moreover, if they were the same person there would be contact (Letters 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 47, 51 and 65 indicate a close relation and frequent correspondence between the two men) and the three shorter ones Ἀνταπολογητικὸν ἐπὶ τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ μοναχῷ κυρῷ Ἠσαΐᾳ (Letters 20, 21 and 24). Moreover, if they were the same person there would
Nektarios, Nikolaos, Onoufrios, Myron Panagiotes, Stephen, Chariton. Even the five monks whose family names are given (Gregory Akropolites, John Aspiotes, Meletios Kritopoulos, John Sinaites, Maximos Smeniotes) and the one γραμματικὸς (Ioannikios Grammatikos) are totally unknown to us from other sources. However, the great number of letters written to them, the warmth of the forms of address in the superscriptions and the body of these letters, as well as other references in the text, indicate that Glykas maintained close relations with all these men and was recognized as an important theologian of his time, despite his provocative position on the corruptibility of the Eucharist (if we accept his identification with Michael Sikidites).

By contrast, it is considerably easier to identify the higher-ranking Byzantines who corresponded with Glykas. All of them belong to the upper class and are members of the restricted circle surrounding Manuel I Komnenos, to which Glykas was apparently close, despite having once fallen

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74. He was presumably from the monastery at τὰ Παναγίου on the Golden Horn (Magdalino, Manuel Komnenos, 373).

75. Member of the Akropolites family, whose name probably derives from their place of residence, namely the acropolis in Constantinople; see ODB, v. 1, entry Akropolites (A. Kazhdan).

76. Or Aspietes, according to the codex Taur. 193. Member of the Aspietes family, an Armenian lineage in Byzantine service from at least the late 11th century; see ODB, v. 1, entry Aspietes (A. Kazhdan).

77. The term γραμματικὸς indicates an educated man, a scribe or secretary. It is possible that it replaced the term ἀσηκρῆτις in the Komnenian Era. It could also mean the secretary of a monastery; see ODB, v. 2, entry Grammatikos (A. Kazhdan).

78. See for example Letter 30: Ἐχεις τοσαῦτα καὶ παρ’ ἡμῶν, ὦ θεία καὶ ἱερὰ κεφαλή, κατὰ σὴν μὲν ἐπίθεσιν οὐδαμῶς, ὅτι καὶ κατὰ πάροδον ἀντεγράφη ταῦτα τῇ θεοφιλίᾳ σου, πολλαῖς ὡς οἶδε Κύριος θλίψεσι κατατρυχομένων ἡμῶν, ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ οὐχ ἀκυρωθεῖ ἡ σὴ μεγαλόνοια μέγαν ὑπανάπτειν πυρσὸν κἀντεῦθεν τὴν περικεχυμένην ἁπαντὰ διαλύειν ἀχλύν, πᾶσαν τε καταλαμπρύνειν ψυχὴν καὶ ἀρρήτου φωτὸς ἐμπιπλάν· οὗ γένοιτο καταπολαύειν ἐς ἀεὶ καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν (Κεφάλαια, v. 1, 360,7-16).

79. On this matter see more in the following pages.
foul of the emperor. Letter 40 is addressed to Manuel I Komnenos himself\textsuperscript{80}, Letter 57 to his beloved niece Theodora\textsuperscript{81}, Letter 63 to his nephew Alexios Kontostefanos\textsuperscript{82}, Letter 26 to his familiar Nikephoros Sinaïtes, Letters 23 and 53 to the μέγας ἑταιρειάρχης and σεβαστὸς John Doukas\textsuperscript{83}, Letter 44 to Andronikos Palaiologos\textsuperscript{84} and four long letters (Letters 36, 37, 42, 76) to the πανσέβαστος and σεβαστὸς Constantine Palaiologos\textsuperscript{85}, whom Glykas admired for his powerful theological education and gentle soul\textsuperscript{86}.

The absence of the other known Byzantine scholars of the period and of any members of the civil bureaucracy or the ecclesiastical hierarchy is definitely curious and needs to be explained. P. Magdalino\textsuperscript{87} gives a persuasive justification: the other scholars may have rejected him because of his plain

\textsuperscript{80} On this letter see more in the following pages.

\textsuperscript{81} Manuel had at least five nieces with the same name (see KRUMBACHER, Michael Glykas, 425-433 and MAGDALINO, Manuel Komnenos, XV). KRUMBACHER and EUSTRATIADIS (Κεφάλαια, v. I, π' 'β'), assume that Glykas' recipient is Theodora Komnene, daughter of Andronikos Komnenos (the second son of John II Komnenos) and wife of Henry of Babenberg (see more in K. BARZOS, Η γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν, II, Thessaloniki 1984, 171-189). MAGDALINO (Manuel Komnenos, 548; see also KURTZ's review, 170), on the other hand, thinks she was the daughter of Manuel's sister Maria, while BARZOS (Η γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν, II, 417-434) identifies her with the daughter of Manuel's other sister Eudokia, who was also his mistress.

\textsuperscript{82} He was the son of Manuel's sister Anna and Stephen Kontostephanos. See more in KRUMBACHER, Michael Glykas, 435-437 and BARZOS, Η γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν, II, 222-248.


\textsuperscript{84} See KRUMBACHER, Michael Glykas, 425.

\textsuperscript{85} He was the brother of George Palaiologos, Manuel's ambassandor in 1163 to the Hungarians. On his false identification with the emperor Constantine IX Palaiologos (1448-1453) see KRUMBACHER, Michael Glykas, 439-441.


\textsuperscript{87} MAGDALINO, Manuel Komnenos, 374-375.
and unpretentious prose, which did not conform to their aesthetic ideal; the highly placed laymen may have avoided him on account of his imprisonment; while the ecclesiastical hierarchy was most probably angry with him because Glykas was usurping their function in interpreting Orthodox doctrine. To a degree, this logical argument explains Glykas’ social isolation. At this point, however, another perspective should be considered: if Glykas has not incorporated all his correspondence in his collection, but only those letters with a specific theological content, our list of his addressees is incomplete and our conjectures become uncertain.

It is a fact that only four of Glykas’ ninety-five letters have to date apparently been studied in terms of their special content: Letter 40, Glykas’ famous refutation of Manuel I Komnenos’ defence of astrology, Letters 59 and 84 on Glykas’ position on the corruptibility of the Eucharist, and Letter 57 to Manuel’s niece Theodora, whom Glykas tries to console for the murder she committed out of jealousy. Among other things this reality also causes misconceptions concerning Glykas’ life, and in the following paragraphs I shall focus briefly on the most characteristic example, the famous Letter 40.

According to the prevailing scholarly view, Michael Glykas should be identified with the monk Michael Sikidites, who was responsible for the theological controversy in the late 12th century on the corruptibility of the Eucharist, for he argued that the Body and Blood of Christ offered during the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist do not contain Christ’s soul and mind and are, therefore, corruptible, just like the body and blood of Jesus before the Resurrection. Though this identification fills in certain gaps in Glykas’ biography, mainly for the period after his imprisonment, and is based on strong arguments (among them the above-mentioned Letters 59 and 84, which express precisely the theological position that led to Sikidites’ condemnation by the Council of Constantinople in the year 1199/1200), it nonetheless raises certain other questions that need further discussion in the light of the entire corpus of Glykas’ letters.

“The great problem”, according to P. Magdalino, one of those scholars who maintain a rather cautious attitude towards Glykas’ identification with Sikidites, without however rejecting it, “is how to reconcile the uncompromisingly Patristic theologian and critic of astrology” – namely

Glykas—“with the sorcerer who put a spell on an unfortunate boatman and conjured up demons in a bath-house to torment his fellow bathers”, namely Sikidites. This is how Sikidites is portrayed in Nicetas Choniates’ history, perhaps echoing distorted and fabricated evidence that was used in his trial. “We could think”, Magdalino proposes, “that after his trial Sikidites became a reformed character, rejecting his old interests with the zeal of a convert” and therefore later composed Letter 40.

From my point of view the key phrase is “uncompromising critic of astrology”, which is based precisely on the well-known Letter 40, the third in a series of letters. More specifically, a monk from the Pantokrator Monastery accused Manuel of impiety because of his love of astrology (first letter, lost today). Manuel answers him with a second letter and the third (Letter 40) is Glykas’ answer to the emperor: Ἀνταπολογητικὸν ἐκ μέρους πρὸς τὴν ἐγχειρισθεῖσαν αὐτῷ γραφὴν τοῦ κραταιοῦ καὶ ἁγίου ἡμῶν βασιλέως κυροῦ Μανουὴλ τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, τὴν ἀπολυθεῖσαν πρὸς τινὰ μοναχὸν ἐπιμεμψάμενον ὑμῖν μικρῶς αὐτῷ διὰ γε τὸ τῆς ἀστρολογίας μάθημα καὶ φιλονεικοῦσαν τὸ τοιοῦτον συστήσασθαι μάθημα φυσικαῖς καὶ γραφικαῖς ἀποδείξεις. A number of different issues are associated with this letter of Glykas, the most significant of all being its dating. The superscription implies that Manuel is still alive, and nothing more, while the absolute lack of chronological evidence in the body of the letter leaves modern scholars a large margin of interpretation. Consequently, those who see in Letter 40 the reason for Glykas’ imprisonment date it before the year 1159, when Glykas was still a layman and most probably imperial secretary. Eustratiadis, on the other hand, places this letter at the end of Manuel I’s reign (1143-1180), shortly before his death (24.9.1080), on the grounds that that was when the emperor finally renounced astrology. To the logical

90. Πιττάκιον ἐκδοθὲν παρὰ τοῦ ἀοιδίμου βασιλέως τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου κυροῦ Μανουὴλ τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ γνώμῃ καὶ εἰδήσει καὶ τῶν ἀρχωμένων ἀρχιερέων καὶ συγκλητικών ἀρχόντων, πολλὸν γῆμον ὑψηλῶν καὶ ἀνεγκαίων καθεστώτων, ἀπολογητικὸν πρὸς γραφήν τινος μοναχοῦ παλατίνου τῆς μονῆς τοῦ Παντοκράτορος, τῷ τῆς ἀστρονομικῆς τέχνης καὶ ἀπεικόνισεν τῷ μαθήματι (Κεφάλαια, v. I, ξζ΄-πο‘).
92. See above notes 8 and 9.
93. See Κεφάλαια, v. I, πο‘.
question that arises in this case, namely how Glykas dares to cross swords with the emperor again after having spent many years in prison and been released only with great difficulty, O. Kresten formulates a reasonable assumption: with Letter 40 Glykas finds the opportunity to revenge himself on the emperor for all the harm he had done him, while at the same time restoring his reputation, damaged after his imprisonment, with a written text. In the same framework D. George underlines Glykas’ methodical effort to demolish the emperor’s argumentation, which sought to redeem his reputation in the eyes of posterity. Nevertheless, after a careful reading of this letter one realizes that in fact Glykas is criticizing, in a highly ironic way, the misreading of sources on which Manuel bases his argumentation and not his occupation with astrology per se. I cite a characteristic excerpt: Αὐτίκα γὰρ ἀπορίᾳ σύνειμι περὶ τοῦ Ἑβραίου ἐκείνου, ὅν ὁ μέγας Βασίλειος, ἡνίκα πρὸς Κύριον ἐξεδήμει, τῆς ἱερᾶς κολυμβήθρας ἠξίωσεν· ἡ γάρ ἐμὴ βίβλος ἰατρόν τε διαγορεύει τὸν Ἰουδαῖον καὶ ὅτι τῷ σφυγμῷ τοῦ ἁγίου διὰ χειρὸς ἐκείνος προσσχών, τὸν τοῦ μεγάλου προέγνωσεν θάνατον. Τὸ δὲ ἐγχειρισθέν μοι γράμμα μαθηματικὸν αὐτὸν ἀποκαλεῖ καὶ ὅτι ταῖς τῶν ἄστρων παρασημειώσεσι τὴν τοῦ ἁγίου προείστηκαν. Καὶ οὐ τούτο μόνον, ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ τὸν μέγαν αὐτὸν παρεισάγει συναινοῦντα τῇ τοῦ Ἑβραίου μαθηματικῇ ἐπιστήμῃ καὶ ἀληθῆ ταύτην ἀποκαλοῦντα, πλείονα τῇ τούτων ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιοῦντα καὶ λέγοντα, ὅν ἐμὴ βίβλος οὐδάμον μεμημηθῇ εὐφύστετα. Ἡ γοῦν ἐσφαλμένως ἔχει τὰ κατ’ αὐτὴν καὶ πλέον οὐδέν, ὡς τὴν διαφωνίαν ταύτην θεραπευθῆναι παρακάλει. And the rest of the letter goes on in a similar way, to my mind indicating more a cautious reader and a well-educated, confident scholar than a theologian and sworn enemy of astrology. In this context I tend to accept an earlier date for Letter 40.

At the same time, however, in a second letter Glykas appears to be more flexible towards astrology, even using an argument similar to the one

94. KRESTEN, Theodoros Stypepiotes, 93-95.
96. Κεφάλαια, v. I, 468-475.

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Manuel used in his own letter\(^{98}\), namely, that medicine and astrology are alike instruments given by God to mankind for its survival after the Fall\(^{99}\) and people should use them with measure\(^{100}\), while if astrology is condemned by the Church Fathers it is because of people mostly make improper use of it\(^{101}\). In other words, in Letter 39 Glykas recognizes the value of astrology as a helpful tool for humankind, on condition that they use it wisely.\(^{102}\) Thus the above mentioned reservation of P. Magdalino against identifying Glykas with Sikidites may to a degree be answered, for a careful reading of Letter 40 in connection with Letter 39 indicates that Glykas actually has not always rejected astrology as completely as we may think today.\(^{103}\)

To sum up, Michael Glykas' collection of ninety-five letters proves to be a core element of his work, and one that needs to be studied as a whole.

\(^{98}\) See for example Η γὰρ εὔκαιρος τούτων χρῆσις καὶ εὔχρηστος, ἐξ ἀπεριέργου γινομένη τρόπον πρὸς οἰκονομίαν τῶν καθ’ ἑαυτόν, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀσέβεια, καθὼς σὺ εἴρηκας. Τάς τε γὰρ δεδομένας ὑπὸ Θεοῦ δυνάμεις τοῖς ἄστροις, τὰς κράσεις καὶ τὰς ποιότητας καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τούτων προσημανόμενα ἐπιγινώσκει. Ἡμέντοι παρέχρησις ἐν τούτῳ ἀναφαίνεται, ὅταν δι’ ἐπικλήσεως τοῖς ἄστροις προομιλοῦσι τίνες, ὡς οἱ τὰ στοιχειώματικα ποιούντες καθ’ ἄνθρωπον λόγον καὶ οἱ ἄστρολογοι μάγοι λέγονται… (Κεφάλαια, v. 1, οβ’, 12-19).

Οὕτω καὶ τὰς τῶν ἀστέρων δυνάμεις εἰ χρήσει τίς ἐνδεχομένως κατὰ τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἑγανόντως λογισμῷ… οὐχ ἁμαρτάνων ἁλώσεται (Κεφάλαια, v. 1, π´, 1-5); Ὁ γοῦν οὕτω νοῶν καὶ εὔσεβῶς εκλαμβάνων τὸν τῆς δημιουργίης προνοίας νόμον καὶ ὅρον, οὐδέν τι προσκρούει Θεῷ (Κεφάλαια, v. 1, π´, 21-22).

Οὕτω μὲν οὖν καὶ τὸ προφητικὸν ἐκεῖνο καὶ θεῖον χάρισμα τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀπολέσαντα, σοφίαν τε καὶ γνῶσιν ἑκατέραν ἀμφότερον μετὰ τὴν παράβασιν, οὐκ ἂν ἀφήκη τοῖς ἄνοητοις κτήνεσι τέλεον αὐτὸν παραβάλλεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ως εἴωθε τὰ πάντα σοφῶς ὁἰκονομῶν, οὐ μικρῶς καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὸν ἐπταίκοτα παρεμυθήσατο διὰ τῆς τῶν ἄστρων κινήσεως τε καὶ τάξεως (Κεφάλαια, v. Ι, 474,18-23).

100. Οἶδε γὰρ ἀκριβῶς ὡς ἡ σὴ μεγαλόνοια, ὡς ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων παράχρησις, οὐ μὴν ἡ εὔκαιρος χρῆσις αὐτῶν τοῖς ἱεροῖς κανόσιν ἠθέτηται. Καὶ τί χρὴ πολλὰ λέγειν; εἰ καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην τηθεὶν εὐεργεσίαν πρὸς ἤμεταρχόμενοι εὐχομένων καὶ οὐ πρὸς ἀνέφην τοῦ δεδοκότος αὐτήν, οὐκ ἂν ἐπὶ τοὐτοῦ έφρόντισεν, ὡς ἐκεῖθεν ἤμετα αὐτοῖς ἀποκρίσεως ὃ τῶν ἱερῶν Πατέρων κατάλογος (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 473,10-16).

101. Ἡροδοτικὴν δὲ τίνα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐνενθερμάτθη δύναμιν, καθαὶ καὶ βάθος ὁ λόγος ἐπέδειχεν, οὐκ ἄν τούτων ἠθέναν, δι’ ἂν αἰτίαν εἰρήκαμεν, εἰ καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων ἐνασχολεῖται τούτοις οὐ συγχωροῦμεν, ὡς μὴ κατὰ λόγον ὅρθον αὐτοῖς ἀποχρώμεθα (Κεφάλαια, v. I, 475,11-15).

102. See also Letter 36, Κεφάλαια, v. I, 394,6 and forth.

103. See also Magdalino, L’Orthodoxie des astrologues, 123-126.
and in conjunction with his better-known chronicle, so that more light can be shed on the ambiguous data of this scholar’s highly interesting life and thought as well as the literary production of the Byzantine 12th century.
If Michael Glykas is well-known today, it is undoubtedly thanks primarily to the Βίβλος Χρονική, his 12th-century chronicle of events from the creation of the world to the death of Alexios I Komnenos. Compared to this chronicle as well as Glykas’ two vernacular poems addressed to the emperor Manuel I Komnenos and to a certain degree his collection of proverbs, Glykas’ epistolographic corpus is the least studied part of his work. It consists of ninety-five texts of theological content, which aim at providing monks or higher-ranking Byzantines with persuasive answers to various theological issues that derive from the reading of the Old and New Testaments or arise in the daily lives of monks and ordinary faithful Christians. Glykas’ argumentation in all these texts is based on the constant citation of mostly ecclesiastical sources and their interpretation with a strong dose of common sense and good will.

The current paper focuses on Glykas’ epistolography, wishing to emphasize that it is a core element of his work, and one that needs to be studied as a whole and in conjunction with his better-known chronicle, so that more light can be shed on the ambiguous data of this scholar’s highly interesting life and thought as well as the literary production of the Byzantine 12th century.