Michał SADOWSKI: *The Trinitarian Analogies in the Christian Arab Apologetic Texts (750—1050).* Series: Syro-Arabica. Vol. 7. Cordoba: CNERU / Beyrouth: CEDRAC, 2019. 307 pp.

Michał Sadowski (1980—2019), a talented young Polish researcher in the field of Arabic Christian studies, left our world suddenly even before he reached the age of forty. He taught dogmatic theology at the Faculty of Theology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Among a number of excellent scholarly articles, he left behind a posthumously published monograph based on a dissertation he defended at the Roman Angelicum (Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino), which addresses Trinitarian analogies in apologetic texts by Arabic authors between 750—1050, that is, from the beginning of Christian Arabization until the mid-11th century.

The book series was edited by Ronney el Gemayel SJ and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, which is a fact that connects two Mediterranean universities. In the West it is the University of Cordoba and its CNERU (Cordoba Near Eastern Research Unit) and in the East it is the Saint-Joseph University of Beirut and its CEDRAC (Center for Documentation and Greek Arabic Research).

Sadowski explains the choice of the topic of his research in the introduction. On the one hand, this epoch of Arab theological heritage, between the 8th and 11th centuries, had been regrettably under-researched on a global scale. On the other hand, it was an incredibly creative epoch when it comes to local theology. This is probably Sadowski's goal, to show the ingenuity of Arabic theologians writing in Arabic. After the occupation, they were forced by Muslim conquerors to accept the Arabic language. In addition, they were under constant pressure to justify the Christian faith and especially its Trinitarian mystery. Christians there adopted and deepened an analogous way of thinking and, based on

analogous Trinitarian models, proved that the Christian Trinitarian faith is not against reason and is not tritheism.

The author presents his interpretation in four parts. Part One (*Analogy: Method and Use in the Trinitarian Discourse*, pp. 7—53) considers the topic of analogy as an adequate theological method. In particular, it considers its possible use in Trinitarian theology. Moreover, he concludes that this is the most biblical and adequate way to talk about a mystery. This is evidenced by Jesus' rhetoric full of narrations and analogies.

In Part Two (*Description of the Trinitarian Analogies in Christian Arab Apologies*, pp. 55—134) Sadowski presents, analyses, and comments on nine texts by Arabic authors. It begins with the classical text considered to be the first Christian text in Arabic, dated for the mid-8th century (*Fí Tathlít Alláh al-Wáhid*), followed by the text of the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (died 823), Melkite Theodore Abu Qurra (died 830), the Jacobites of Abu Rā´ita at-Takriti (died 830), the less known Ibrahim at-Tabarani and Butrus al-Bai Ra'si (both active in 9th century), the famous Jacobite theologian and philosopher Yahya ibn 'Adí (died 974), Nestorian Abu al-Faraja Abdallah ibn al-Tajjib (died 1043), and finally, Elijah of Nisibis (died 1046). In the individual passages, he notes significant works, but also significant analogies used by the particular figures.

In Part Three (*Trinitarian Analogies in Arabic: Their Origin*, pp. 135—201) Sadowski shows his overview in the history of theology, because he very synthetically maps analogous thinking in the patristic epoch there. He studies applied analogies with authors such as Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, James of Sarug or John of Damascus (and others). Then he pays close attention to the individual themes of patristic analogies. He presents an example about the tree, the water, the eye, also about the body (and soul and spirit), mouth (and language and word).

In Part Four (*Doctrinal Significance of the Trinitarian Analogies*, pp. 203—256) the author proves that his intention is primarily theological. His knowledge of Greek and Arabic is only an aid to deep dogmatic syntheses. He notices there the analogies used to describe the unity in the Trinity, or the secrets of the Trinitarian dynamics of procreation and procession. It also draws attention to analogous terminology describing substance, attribute, hypostasis. At the end of this section, he highlights the usefulness and true theology of these analogies in Arab Christianity, which has lived and continues to live in the Muslim milieu.

In a short conclusion (pp. 253—256), the author underlines not only the contemporary uniqueness of the use of analogy, but also the possible reach of its present use for intra-Christian dialogue and interreligious dialogue. It opens up another possible field of research, within Christology

or Mariology. In the conclusion, Michał Sadowski also says that it would be good to supplement the monograph with Syrian authors and Syrian literature. This is also an opportunity to continue research.

In the Appendix (pp. 257—263), he documents ten known patristic Trinitarian analogies that were not used by Arab authors. After a bibliographical list (pp. 267—293), the monograph presents useful indexes (pp. 297—307), first with biblical references, then with Qur'anic quotations and proper names. What follows is a register of Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Hebrew and Syrian technical terms. There is also an index with local names and used manuscripts. The block is closed by a thematic index.

The monograph boasts original languages, with particular emphasis on Greek and Arabic, and always with a faithful translation into English.

It seems to me that the author's emphasis was placed on the theology of Arabic authors. Better said, Sadowski emphasizes the method in their theology. I leave language and terminological diversity aside. Although it pays attention to the various concepts used by the analysed authors, it does not place so much emphasis on explaining these differences in terms of their denominations and theologies growing out of singular branches of Christianity. This is certainly not a mistake, but this is where another possible continuation of the current research lies. Namely, it would certainly be worthwhile to clarify the method of using the analogy for Melkites, Jacobites and Nestorians.

Without any shadow of pathos, I can say that the prematurely deceased Michał Sadowski remains one of the key authors in this field, which is exemplified by the reviewed monograph mapping the theological thinking of Arabic-speaking Christian authors. He proved by the theological form that the use of analogous thinking is a very original contribution of Arab writers. The seventeen studied analogies represent the theological ingenuity of Christian Arab thought. In my opinion, the peer-reviewed monograph should become compulsory reading in seminars on dogmatic and fundamental theology. The use of allegorical thinking and the philosophy of the symbol is extremely important, especially in today's media age. Arab Christians can help us with this.

Lukáš de la Vega Nosek
🆔 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8593-6187