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The “*Brief Exegesis of John Climacus’
Heavenly Ladder*” by Nikephoros Kallistos
Xanthopoulos

*Remarks on its Nature and Sources**

In 1971 the announcement by Linos Politis that he had discovered a voluminous new work by a well-known author caused a sensation.¹ The work was a commentary on *The Heavenly Ladder* of John Climacus and its author was Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, best known as a hymnographer and an ecclesiastical historian (*fl.* in the reign of Andronicus II; d. perhaps 1326/8 or a few years later).² The text became available for the first time to the scientific community, in a bulky yet elegant publication destined for the wider public too, more than thirty years after Politis’ announcement, in 2002. The editors responsible, the Metropolitan and two archimandrites of the Metropolis of

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¹ L. POLITIS, Άγνωστο έργο του Νικηφόρου Καλλιόστου Ξανθοπούλου. Έξήγηση στόν Ίωάννη τής Κλίμακος. *Κληρονομία* 3 (1971) 69–84; cf. CPG 7852–3 under Scholia (d).

² On Nikephoros Kallistos see *PLP* no. 20826, in: Faszikel 8. Vienna 1986, with previous literature; also R. BROWNING, A Young Man in a Hurry - Two unpublished Letters of Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, in: Δώρημα στόν Ίωάννη Καραγιαννόπουλο. *Βυζαντινά* 13,1 (1985) 141–152 (= *id.*, History, Language and Literacy in the Byzantine World. Variorum Reprints, Northampton 1989, no. X); S. ΚΟΤΖΑΒΑΣΣΙ, Τρεις ανώνυμες επιστολές του πατριμακού κώδικα 377. *Hell* 40 (1989) 103–112, esp. 110, placing Nikephoros’ death between 1326/7 and the abdication of Andronicus II from the throne in 1328.

Nikopolis (Preveza, Greece),³ had at their disposal the *codex unicus* of the work, ms. I of the archive of the Metropolis, which had undergone restoration a few years earlier. The manuscript dates from the first half of the fourteenth century, and so it is roughly contemporary with the author, if not written during his lifetime. The *editio princeps* is accompanied by a brief general introduction and a few notes, mainly on the text and its biblical sources. The only scientific study of the work so far is the preliminary article by Politis, who described the manuscript and showed that the work is different from the other surviving major Byzantine commentary on the *Ladder*, that by Elias Metropolitan of Crete. He also raised the issue of the relationship between the two commentaries, to be clarified in the future, yet the question has not been asked again since.

This article will address a few of the questions surrounding the text, drawing on the 2002 edition. More specifically, it will deal with the production environment of Nikephoros' commentary as well as the degree of its originality and its relationship to certain sources. The case will be argued on the basis of selected passages.

The new work bears the title Ἐξήγησις σύντομος εἰς τὴν βίβλον πᾶσαν τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ τῆς Κλίμακος.⁴ Despite its designation as a *Brief Exegesis*, it is a lengthy work (around 450 pages of the edition including the corresponding text of the *Ladder*).⁵ It does not survive intact, but is mutilated almost half-way through Rung 28 (*des.* PG 1133B κλοπή ἐστι τὸ ἀνε[παισθήτως]). There are no internal or external indications as to its date or intended readership.⁶

³ Νικηφόρου Καλλίστου Ξανθοπούλου, Ἐξήγησις σύντομος εἰς τὴν Κλίμακα τοῦ Ἰωάννου, edd. MELETIOS [KALAMARAS] Metropolitan of Nikopolis–Archimandrite S. DIMITREAS – Archimandrite B. LAMPROPOULOS. Preveza 2002.

⁴ See cod. p. 21, where the exegesis of the *Ladder* proper begins following the commentary on the introductory texts (letter of John of Raithou to John Climacus, the latter's reply, and the Life of Climacus by Daniel of Raithou); also preface to the edition, p. 2. In the lower margin of p. 1, a scribe (identical with one of the scribes of the codex according to POLITIS, Ἄγνωστο ἔργο 71) penned the following title, which cannot stem from the author: Σαφεστάτη ἐξήγησις εἰς τὴν οὐρανοδρόμον θεῖαν κλίμακα.

⁵ On pp. 37–513.

⁶ It is doubtful whether in a poem addressed to Nikephoros and praising him as an exegete of the Scriptures, Manuel Philes also alluded to the *Ladder* commentary; see Manuelis Philae carmina II, ed. E. MILLER. Paris 1857; repr. Amsterdam 1967, cod. Paris. no. 12, v. 10 τῆ γνωσιτικῆ κλίμακα πηγνὺς τὰς βάσεις; cf. Ae. MARTINI, Manuelis Philae carmina inedita (*Atti della Reale Accademia di Archeologia, Lettere e*

A comparison with Xanthopoulos’ other works can be instructive, however. Most telling is the commentary on the “unread” Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus, of which only specimens have been published. The work bears the title: Σύντομος σχολιώδης δι’ ὅλου ἐξήγησις εἰς τοὺς μὴ ἀναγινωσκομένους λόγους τοῦ Θεολόγου.⁷ This is similar to the title of the *Ladder* commentary with the addition of the word σχολιώδης, meaning in the form of scholia accompanying the text.⁸ Nikephoros’ preoccupation with brevity is also apparent in his various verse epitomes of historical and religious interest, such as those of the Old Testament (Σύνοψις θείας Γραφῆς / Γραφῆς πάσης σύνοψις ἠκριβομένη) and of subsequent Jewish history according to Fl. Iosephus,⁹ as well as a Συνοπτικὴ σύνοψις ἁγίων χρόνου, i.e. a summary menologium of the saints of the year.¹⁰ The composition of such epitomes and the compilation of various versified lists, for example of the emperors and patriarchs of CP,¹¹ along with a few of his other works, most prominently the *Progymnasmata*, have plausibly been explained as serving the needs of the classroom and pointing to a teaching activity of

Belle Arti 20, Suppl.). Naples 1900, no. 65, v. 35, where the same expression is used for another book.

⁷ According to ms. Marc. gr. 76, f. 1v, the best manuscript of the work; quoted by T. SINKO, De Nicephoro Xanthopulo Gregorii Nazianzeni imitatore. *Eos* 12 (1906) 91–97, esp. 91–92, and I. SAJDAK, Historia critica scholiastarum et commentatorum Gregorii Nazianzeni I (*Meletemata Patristica* 1). Cracow 1914, 194; see E. MIONI, Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum Codices Graeci Manuscripti I. Thesaurus antiquus. Codices 1–229. Rome 1981.

⁸ Single occurrence of σχολιώδης here, according to the lexicon of Stephanus, the only one to record this word. In the Marcianus mentioned in the previous note the scholia bear numbers.

⁹ PG 147, 605–624 and 623–632 respectively.

¹⁰ BHG 1617n (with *Novum Auctarium*); [H. Guntius], Cyri Theodori Prodromi epigrammata. Basel 1536, 158v–163r; A. DMITRIEVSKIĬ, *Τυπικά* II. Petrograd 1917, 431–446 (without the saints of February). On these verses see recently F. KOLOVOU, Der Codex Hamburgensis 31 in serinio (Fragment. 2, ff. 1^r–2^v). Iambische Synaxarverse des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. *JÖB* 51 (2001) 337–341 with literature.

¹¹ For a comprehensive list of these works, both published and unpublished, see *PLP* as in n. 2 above, 196; cf. also the articles on Nikephoros by M. JUGIE, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 11 (1931) 446–452 and D. STIERNON, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 11 (1982) 203–208, as well as H.-G. BECK, Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich (*Handbuch der Allertumswissenschaft* II,1). Munich 1959, 705–707.

Nikephoros in CP,¹² possibly in the “Patriarchal School”.¹³ The commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzus and the *Ladder* (together with the unpublished commentary on the *Liber ad pastorem*) fit well in this group and could be considered as teaching tools.¹⁴ The examination that follows will further illuminate the description of the *Exegesis* as *syntomos*.

Even though Nikephoros often accompanied his works with prefatory material of some sort,¹⁵ the commentary on the *Ladder* has no preface explaining why he chose to interpret this particular text. The reasons seem to have been varied. The *Ladder* was a standard text on monastic spirituality and suitable for the training of the clergy. How-

¹² J. GLETTNER, Die Progymnasmata des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. Erstausgabe. *BZ* 33 (1933) 1–12. 255–270, esp. 5; STIERNON 207; BROWNING, *A Young Man* 146–147.

¹³ GLETTNER, Progymnasmata 6; BROWNING, *A Young Man* 146. Nikephoros is not included among the teachers of the “Patriarchal School” mentioned by C.N. CONSTANTINIDES, Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1204 – ca. 1310) (*Texts and Studies of the History of Cyprus* 11). Nicosia 1982, 50–65. Of his output only the Ecclesiastical History is mentioned by S. MERGIALI, L’enseignement et les lettrés pendant l’époque des Paléologues (1261–1453) (*Εταιρεία τῶν Φίλων τοῦ Λαοῦ. Κέντρον Ἐρεῦνης Βυζαντίου* 5). Athens 1996, 522, and E. FRYDE, The Early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261–c. 1360) (*The Medieval Mediterranean* 27). Leiden – Boston – Cologne 2000, 313.

¹⁴ Already STIERNON 207 and BROWNING, *A Young Man* 146, without having seen the Commentary on the *Ladder*.

¹⁵ See his Ecclesiastical History (dedicatory letter to Emperor Andronicus II and introductory chapter of Book I; PG 145, 560–601. 604–620), the four commentaries on the *anabathmoi* of the *Oktoechos*, the names of various liturgical hymns, the liturgy of the Presanctified, and Cosmas the Melode’s hymn to the Virgin Τὴν τιμωτέραν (epistolary prefaces addressed to the archimandrite Kallinikos of the monastery of Kouzenas [τῆς τοῦ Κουζηνᾶ μονῆς]), and apparently his commentary on Gregory of Nazianzus, on which see below in this article, 154. It is worth noting that according to BROWNING, *A Young Man* 144, the four letters addressed to Kallinikos are unpublished and preserved in cod. Bodl. Auct. E. 5. 14. Two of them were actually published long ago; see Kyrrillos Athanasiades (ed.), Ἐρμηνεῖα εἰς τοὺς Ἀναβαθμοὺς τῆς Ὀκτωήχου παρὰ Νιζηφόρου Καλλίστου τοῦ Ξανθοπούλου. Jerusalem 1862, 126 and 130–131 for the prefaces to the commentaries on the names of various liturgical hymns and Τὴν τιμωτέραν respectively (the latter commentary addressed, however, πρὸς τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς Ὁδηγητρίας ἱερομόναχον καὶ ἐκκλησιαρχὴν κύριον Νεόφυτον). As for the Bodleian manuscript, it contains only the title, not the text of the preface and commentary on the liturgy of the Presanctified; for other manuscripts of the prefaces, see H.O. COXE, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues, I. Greek Manuscripts*, Oxford 1969 (repr. with corrections from the edition of 1853), 662.

ever, the only other complete Byzantine commentary surviving,¹⁶ that of Elias, who was Metropolitan of Crete probably around 1120–1130,¹⁷ was long and rather difficult to comprehend, and the disparate scholia that have come down to us in the manuscripts of the *Ladder* did not constitute, at least judging by their published form, a comprehensive commentary. There was, therefore, a real vacuum, which Nikephoros would have attempted to fill. Moreover, he obviously appreciated the work highly, as also manifested by the fact that he included its author in his versified list of church fathers, which must have been intended for use in school.¹⁸ Being himself a member of the clergy of St. Sophia,¹⁹ he appears to have been influenced by monasticism and mysticism. His progymnasma on *gnome*, for which he employed a Christian subject contrary to the model of Aphthonios, testifies to his admiration of the monastic ideal of poverty,²⁰ although it is questionable whether he became a monk despite the evidence of later tradition.²¹ As far as mysticism is concerned, it has been observed that Nikephoros was familiar with its terminology.²²

¹⁶ An anonymous commentary on the *Ladder* is contained in cod. Marc. gr. II, 195 of the end of the sixteenth century as pointed out by A. RIGO, Giovanni Climaco a Bisanzio, in: S. CHIALÀ–L. CREMASCHI (edd.), Giovanni Climaco e il Sinai. Atti del IX Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa - sezione bizantina, Bose, 16–18 settembre 2001 (*Spiritualità orientale*). Bose 2002, 195–205, esp. 200 with n. 24; cf. the mention by K. KRUMBACHER, Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527–1453). Munich 1897², 144.

¹⁷ On Elias see V. LAURENT, Le synodicon de Sybrita et les métropolitans de Crète aux X^e–XIII^e siècles. *EO* 32 (1933) 385–412, esp. 400–402 (on his date); BECK, Kirche 655 with literature (“der bedeutendste Name in der Väterexegese der Komnenenzeit”); F. LEFHERZ, Studien zu Gregor von Nazianz. Mythologie, Überlieferung, Scholiasten (diss.). Bonn 1958, 140–142; also POLITIS, Άγνωστο έργο 73–75. 80–81; CPG 7852–3, Scholia (a) with note.

¹⁸ PG 145, 553, v. 10: Ὁ τῆς Κλίμακος, ἡ μετάρσιος βάσις.

¹⁹ On the relevant evidence (cod. Bodl. Auct. E. 5. 14, f. 1), see JUGIE 446; STIERNON 203.

²⁰ GLETTNER, Progymnasmata 6. According to an epistle that has been interpreted as referring to Nikephoros’ death, he was leading a monastic way of life (ἔξω σώματος τὸν βίον ἅπαντα βιοῦν ἐφκει); see KOTZABASSI, Τρεις ἀνόνημες ἐπιστολές 111 (Epist. 2, 29–30). For parallels on progymnasmata with Christian subjects, see CONSTANTINIDES, Higher Education 100–101.

²¹ Except perhaps towards the end of his life; cf. JUGIE 446–447; STIERNON 205.

²² F. WINKELMANN, Zur Bedeutung der Kirchengeschichte des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, in: Ἀνδριάς. Herbert Hunger zum 80. Geburtstag. *JÖB* 44 (1994) 439–447, esp. 443. 446.

Nikephoros' ambition to make a substantial contribution to the patristic scholarship of his day is evident in the case of his commentary on the "unread" Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus mentioned above. Nikephoros wrote two fictitious letters, apparently to serve as a preface to the commentary on Gregory.²³ He says that he composed the commentary before his twentieth birthday (Epist. 1, 16; 2, 67–68).²⁴ His purpose was to provide brief and clear comments on the text (Epist. 1, 24), which, contrary to the brilliant yet high-style theological commentary of Elias of Crete, would be accessible to the less educated such as Ignatios, to whom Nikephoros attributed his fictitious first letter (ibid., 25–28). He also stated that almost nothing was his own original thinking, but that he had compiled and abbreviated material from previous exegetes, among whom Elias occupied the first place (Epist. 2, 84–88), with the intention of including all that needed to be said (Epist. 2, 97). His long-term attachment to the church of St. Sophia (Epist. 1, 30–31; 2, 94–95) would have given him the necessary free access to the books kept at the Patriarchal Library.²⁵

Nikephoros' commentary on the *Ladder* can be envisaged as a parallel case to his commentary on Gregory. The commentary on the *Ladder* was perhaps also a work of his youth, in which he aimed at providing an easily accessible commentary while taking account of all available material. His commentary on the *anabathmoi* of the *Oktoechos* testifies that he worked quickly, as he composed this work, which extends to 125 printed pages, in just eight days.²⁶ Like the Gregory commentary, the *Ladder* exegesis was most probably a textbook, yet a wider audience, such as that envisaged for the former work, cannot be excluded. The survival of the *Brief Exegesis* in just one manuscript,

²³ First edition with commentary by BROWNING, *A Young Man* 147–153; line-numbers here follow the re-edition by I. VASSIS, *Ein alter Zeuge von zwei Briefen des Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos*. *JÖB* 46 (1996) 265–274.

²⁴ At the same age he also wrote his encomium on St. Mary Magdalen (BHG 1162); see PG 147, 576A; cf. SINKO, *De Nicephoro Xanthopulo* 95.

²⁵ See K.A. ΜΑΝΑΡΗΣ, *Αί ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Βιβλιοθήκαι αὐτοκρατορικαὶ καὶ πατριαρχικὴ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν αὐταῖς χειρογράφων μέχρι τῆς Ἀλώσεως (1453) (Ἀθηνᾶ. Σειρὰ Διατριβῶν καὶ Μελετημάτων* 14). Athens 1972, 133–141 on Nikephoros' use of the Patriarchal Library; BROWNING, *A Young Man* 146.

²⁶ See Athanasiades, *Ἐρμηνεία*, 125 ἀλλ' ἡμῖν καὶ οὕτως ὁ τῆς ὑπακοῆς μισθὸς περικίεσται, ὅσον τάχος ἐξηγνύκοσι τὸ ἔργον· ἴσας γὰρ τοῖς ἡχοῖς ἡμέρας προσαναλώσαντες διεπεραιώσαμεν τὸ αἰτούμενον.

if not due to the hazards of survival, indicates, however, that the work did not enjoy popularity.²⁷

Since Nikephoros was expected by his contemporaries not to innovate in matters of doctrine, his statement affirming his compilatory working methods in the case of the Gregory commentary can be seen as a commonplace and/or a formula of self-protection against accusations of heresy.²⁸ At the same time, it should also be taken at face value.²⁹ Though no definitive study of his sources exists and previous scholarship is not unanimous on his main source, it is clear that he drew, often verbatim, on earlier texts, including Elias.³⁰ It is indicative of Nikephoros’ intention of offering an alternative to Elias that he commented on the same works of Gregory as Elias (27 out of 28 “unread” orations, that is apart from Or. 37, as well as Epist. 101 and 102, while he added comments on Epist. 243).

It is, therefore, necessary to investigate whether Nikephoros applied the same method to his commentary on the *Ladder*. Unfortunately for our purposes, the only surviving comparable work, Elias’ exegesis of

²⁷ Cf. RIGO, Giovanni Climaco a Bisanzio 200, who speaks of “una circolazione senza alcun dubbio minore” in comparison with that of Elias’ commentary.

²⁸ As suggested by BROWNING, *A Young Man* 145. 152.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.* 145.

³⁰ See SINKO, *De Nicephoro Xanthopulo* 92–93, agreeing with J. Morelli on Nikephoros’ dependence on Elias and putting forward the example of Nikephoros’ scholia on the preface of Gregory’s Or. 2: these were partly copied from Elias, while they also display influences from the commentaries of Nicetas of Heraclea and Basil Minimus, and probably include some thoughts of Nikephoros himself. On the other hand, SAJDAK, *Historia critica* 192. 197–198, argued for Basil Minimus as Nikephoros’ main source, as suggested by the commentary on Gregory’s Epist. 243 (it should be noted, however, that this Epist. had not been commented upon by Elias, so that Nikephoros had to resort to another source); again in *id.*, *Die Scholiasten der Reden des Gregor von Nazianz. Ein kurzgefasster Bericht über den jetzigen Stand der Forschung*. *BZ* 30 (1929/30) 268–274, esp. 273 on Nikephoros’ almost exclusive dependence on Basil Minimus. SINKO insisted on his own view; see his *Literatura grecka* III.2. Wrocław 1954, 188 for Nikephoros as “an excerptor of Elias, Basil Minimus and other previous scholiasts”. Cf. LEFHERZ, *Studien* 144, who simply noted that “Die Scholien des Basilius Minimus haben als Vorlage gedient, vielleicht auch die anderer” (with literature). Finally, BROWNING, *A Young Man* 145–146. 153, suggested that the work is “elementary and derivative” and that “it appears in fact to be a text-book for students”, and wondered whether Nikephoros “simply compiled material” from Elias and a surviving tenth-century “sylloge” of scholia, which includes Basil Minimus.

the *Ladder* is largely unpublished.³¹ Only excerpts from his commentary accompany each Rung in Rader's edition of the *Ladder*, which is reproduced by Migne.³² It has been suggested that Rader's scholia were excerpted from Elias and others by an anonymous and were wrongly attributed to Elias.³³ The provenance of a number of them from various patristic authors has been identified.³⁴ The issue of the relationship of the identified scholia to Elias' work remains open, however. The lack of a critical edition or full-scale publication does not allow us to pass a definitive judgement on the degree to which Elias' commentary is an original piece of work, a paraphrase or a compilation, but it is a valid hypothesis that he drew on earlier sources as he did in his commentary on Gregory.³⁵ A number of other scholia on the *Ladder* have been published,³⁶ but the majority of the medieval Greek scholia preserved in the manuscripts of the *Ladder* remain unpublished.

I have collated *exempli gratia* passages from Nikephoros' commentary with the respective text of Elias as preserved in Laur. IX, 11 (parch., 12th cent., ff. 350), apparently its most ancient manuscript. When necessary, the testimony of the Laurentianus was corroborated

³¹ On its manuscripts, see especially SAJDAK, *Historia critica* 112–116; also POLITIS, Ἄγνωστο ἔργο 73 n. 3.

³² For the scholia see PG 88, 644–1209.

³³ See A. JAHN, PG 36, 747–748; repeated by SAJDAK, *Historia critica* 112.

³⁴ In a series of articles by E. PETERSON; see CPG 7852–3 as in n. 17 above; also T. ANTONOPOULOU, Unpublished Scholia on the Apostle Paul and John Climacus by the Emperor Leo VI, in: M. HINTERBERGER – E. SCHIFFER (edd.), *Byzantinische Sprachkunst. Studien zur byzantinischen Literatur gewidmet W. Hörandner zum 65. Geburtstag (Byzantinisches Archiv 20)*. Berlin – New York 2007, 20–34, esp. 30, n. 21.

³⁵ In the case of Elias' commentary on Gregory scholarly opinion is divided as to whether it is an original piece of work or a compilation; see SAJDAK, *Historia critica* 99 n. 2 and LEFHERZ, *Studien* 140–141 on previous scholarship. For characteristic positive views see SAJDAK, *Scholiasten* 273, who maintains that Elias knew previous commentators but appropriated little from them, and SINKO, *Literatura grecka* 187, who speaks of Elias' erudition and rich selection of pagan authors and church fathers; also F. TRISOGLIO, *Mentalità ed atteggiamenti degli scolasti di fronte agli scritti di S. Gregorio di Nazianzo*, in: J. MOSSAY (ed.), *II. Symposium Nazianzenum*. Louvain-la-Neuve, 25–28 août 1981. Paderborn – Munich – Vienna – Zurich 1983, 187–251, esp. 239–248.

³⁶ On the *Ladder* scholia by Photius (below, n. 38), Michael Psellus, the so-called "John of Raithou", and various anonymous published and unpublished scholia, see CPG 7852–3 (with Supplementum) *Scholia* (b–c) and (e–f), and ANTONOPOULOU, *Unpublished Scholia*, 29, n. 19, and 30–31, n. 23.

by another important manuscript, Coisl. 87 (paper, 14th cent., ff. 300). The examination of a few, in my view characteristic cases that follows will reveal the close relationship between the two commentaries and will shed light on Nikephoros’ working methods.

The first three examples concern the ninth Rung of the *Ladder* (PG 88, 840D–844B Περὶ μνησικακίας), which is accompanied by a few scholia in the PG (844B–845B), and is commented upon by both Nikephoros (p. 223–227 of the new edition) and Elias (cod. Laur. IX, 11, ff. 131v–134v). The division of the *Ladder*’s text into sections in Nikephoros’ manuscript (reproduced in the edition) is almost the same as in Elias with a few variations, which consist of the further splitting of three sections into two units each, a method that allows easier access to the corresponding commentary.

1) In the first example, Nikephoros’ commentary on the first section of the Rung (PG 840D–841A το περὶ αὐτῆς εἵπωμεν) begins with a paraphrase of the *Ladder* and then reproduces Elias’ commentary (Laur., f. 131v) partly verbatim and partly adapted, while another part is omitted. Nikephoros’ text (p. 223, col. a–b) is the following (boldface is used for words occurring in Elias as well, whether quoted or adapted, and italics for words taken over from the *Ladder*; for all of Nikephoros quotations below I reproduce the text of the edition, including its punctuation, which deviates from traditional norms and is obviously partly derived from the manuscript):

Λίαν ἀρίστος ὁ πάνσοφος οὗτος, τὰς πρὸς ὕψος οὐρανοῦ ἀναγούσας ἀγίας ἀρετάς, τῇ τοῦ Ἰακώβ κλίμακι παρεικάζει· (ἐκ γὰρ τῶν κάτω ἐπαίρουσι· καὶ πρὸς οὐρανὸν τοὺς βουλομένους διαβιβάζουσι)· τὰς δὲ ἐναντίας ταύταις κακίας τῇ τοῦ κορυφαίου Πέτρου ἀλύσει, διὰ τὸ βάρος καὶ τὸ καθέλκειν τὸν αὐταῖς δεδεμένον κάτω· (πᾶσα γὰρ κακία βάρος ἐμποιεῖν εἶωθε ταῖς καρδίαις· ἔστι δ’ ὅτε οὐδ’ αἰσθάνεσθαι παρασκευάζει τὸν πάσχοντα)· εἰπὼν δὲ τῇ ἐκπεσοῦσῃ, ἐδήλωσε τὸ δυνατῶς ἔχειν τὸν σπουδάζοντα ἀποθέσθαι αὐτήν, εἰ βούλοιο· ὅπερ ἔστι διὰ θερμῆς πίστεως· ὁ σύμβολον τῆς τοῦ Πέτρου θερμότητος· οὗ χάριν, οἶμαι, καὶ τούτου νῦν ἐμνημόνευσεν ἢ ἴσως καὶ διὰ τὴν μετάνοιαν αὐτοῦ, ὡς εἴρηται· δι’ ἧς πᾶσα ἁμαρτία ἐξαφανίζεται.

Ὡς γοῦν ἡ ἄλυσις ἐτέρα τῆς ἐτέρας ἔχεται, καὶ συνδέδενται ἀλλήλαις, οὕτω νῦν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κακιῶν μία ἔχεται τῆς ἐτέρας· ἡ γὰρ γαστρομαργία, τῇ πορνείᾳ καὶ ἀσελγείᾳ συμπλέκεται· καὶ ὁ φθόνος ἔχεται τοῦ φόνου· καὶ τᾶλλα ὁμοίως· ὥσπερ καὶ τοῦ θυμοῦ, γέννημα ἢ μνησικακία ἐνταῦθα· καλοῦντος οὖν καιροῦ μετὰ τὸν θυμόν, περὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ θυγατρὸς εἵπωμεν.

Τὸ μὲν οὖν περὶ τοῦ Ἰακώβ, ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ γέγραπται τῆς Γενέσεως· τὸ δὲ περὶ τῆς ἀλύσεως, ἦν ἐφόρεσεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης τὸν ἀπόστολον Πέτρον, ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἀποστόλων ἀναγέγραπται Πράξεις.

The last paragraph, which gives the biblical references for Jacob's ladder and the chains of St. Peter, is probably by Nikephoros himself. However, the biblical reference for Jacob's ladder is also found in Elias immediately after the first sentence of his commentary mentioning this Old Testament episode (Laur., f. 131v); it is followed by the relevant Genesis quotation, which Nikephoros apparently considered superfluous and did not reproduce.

The first scholion published by Rader (PG 844BC), which corresponds to Nikephoros' first paragraph, is ultimately derived from Elias.

2) The second example comes from the end of the commentary on the second section of Rung 9 (PG 88, 841A Μνησικακία ἐστὶ – κάθωρος κακία). Nikephoros' text (p. 224, col. a) is again derived from Elias (Laur., f. 132rv):

Ἄλλο δὲ εὐχή, καὶ ἄλλο προσευχή· εὐχή μὲν γὰρ ἀρετῆς ἄθλον· προσευχή δὲ ἀρετῆς ἔπαθλον· ἢ, κατὰ τὸν Νυσσαέα Γρηγόριον, εὐχή μὲν ἐστὶν ἐπαγγελία τινὸς τῶν κατ' εὐσέβειαν ἀφιερωμένων· προσευχή δέ, αἰτήσεις ἀγαθῶν μεθ' ἱκετηρίας προσαγομένη Θεῷ.

The whole passage occurs in Elias in a considerably more extended form. Elias first provides a few other definitions of the distinction between εὐχή and προσευχή, which Nikephoros omits. In fact, the first definition quoted by Nikephoros (εὐχή – ἔπαθλον) is an abbreviated form of part of a longer quotation, at the end of which Elias reveals his source: οὕτω μὲν οὖν ὁ μέγας Μάξιμος (see Maximus Confessor, *Expositio orationis dominicae*, l. 215–221 ed. P. Van Deun, *CCSG* 23). Nikephoros (who quotes part of l. 218–220 of Maximus) omits the indication of the provenance of the passage, although it is stated in his source. There follows in Elias the reference to Gregory of Nyssa (κατὰ δὲ τὸν τῆς Νύσσης πρόεδρον εἰπεῖν Γρηγόριον). Thus, even an explicit reference by Nikephoros to a source turns out to be second-hand. Moreover, Elias provides a longer quotation from Gregory of Nyssa (*De oratione dominica oratio II*, p. 21, 20–26; p. 22, 3–9 ed. J.F. Callahan, *GNO VII,2*) than Nikephoros (who quotes l. 20–22).

3) The third example from Rung 9 concerns PG 841D Ξύλω σαθοῦ ἔνδοθεν ἐναποτίκτονται σκόληγες· καὶ πραιοτάτοις (ἦθεσι add. cod. Nicopol.) καὶ ἡσυχίαι νόθοις συγκολλᾶται (συγκεκόλληται cod. Nicopol.) μῆνις.

The beginning of Nikephoros’ commentary is the following (p. 226, col. b):

Ἐντὸς τοῦ **σεσημμένου ξύλου σκώληκες ἀπογεννῶνται** καὶ ἐν ἡμέροις ἦθεσι καὶ πράοις· οὐ μὴν δὲ *πρασιότοις* ὀφείλει γράφεσθαι καὶ ἡσυχίαν οὐ γηρίαν καὶ ἐντελεῖ, ἀλλὰ **νενοθευμένην** καὶ ἀλλοτριαν τῆς κατὰ Θεὸν πολιτείας μετερχομένοις, *μηῆς* εἴωθεν δυσασποπάστωσ ἐγκείσθαι.

Nikephoros certainly used Elias, who on f. 134r of the Laur. has: *Σαθρόν τὸ σεσημμένον λέγεται ξύλον καὶ σκολήκων ὑπόπλεων· ἡ γὰρ σηπότης* (read *σαπρότης* with Coisl. 87, f. 133r) *ἀπογεννᾶν οἶδεν ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ σκολήκων πλήθος*. Elias also uses the word *νενοθευμένος*.

Moreover, with regard to Nikephoros’ evidently parenthetical sentence οὐ μὴν – γράφεσθαι, Elias offers the following long passage (Laur., f. 134r):

Οἱ γὰρ δοκοῦντες εἶναι τι καὶ μὴ ὄντες, δικαίως νόθοι καὶ <οὐ>¹ γνήσιοι λέγονται· διὸ καὶ μακρὰν τῶν οἰκτιρῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔρχονται διὰ τὴν *προσκολληθείσαν μῆνιν* αὐτοῖς ἐξ ἰδίας γνώμης. Οἱ δὲ νόθοι τῷ ὑπερθετικῷ οὐ καλῶς διασημαίνονται· ὅθεν σφαλῆναι οὐ τὸν ἐκδεδωκότα ἀλλὰ τὸν γραφέα ἔστιν εἰπεῖν, ἀντὶ τοῦ πρώοις, *πρασιότοις* γεγραφότα. Ὑπερθετικὸν δὲ λέγεται τὸ κατ’ ἐξοχὴν λεγόμενον ἐν συγκρίσει, ὡσπερ ἂν εἴποι τις ἐπὶ παραδείγματος τοιοῦτου, οἷον· εἰσὶ τινες τρεῖς, *πραότητας* μετερχόμενοι· εἴπερ συγκρίνεις αὐτοὺς ἀλλήλοις, εἰκὸς ἔστι μὴ πάντας ἐπίσης μετέχειν τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἀλλὰ τὸν μὲν ὑπέρθεσιν ἔχειν τῶν λοιπῶν, εἰς τέλος ἐλθόντα τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρετῆς, ὃν δὴ καὶ *πρασιότατον* κλητέον κατ’ ὑπέρθεσιν, τὸν δὲ ἄλλον τὴν μέσην ἔτι βαδίζειν, ὃν δὴ καὶ αὐτὸν συγκρινόμενον μετὰ τοῦ ἐσχάτου, τοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔτι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἔχοντος καὶ πρώου καλουμένου, *πραότερον* ὀνομαστέον κατὰ σύγκρισιν· ἐπὶ τούτων μὲν οὖν οὕτως ἕκαστον κλητέον, ἐπὶ δὲ γε τῶν *νενοθευμένως* λεγομένων χώραν τοῦτο οὐχ ἔξει.

¹Coisl. 87, f. 133r

Nikephoros omits the lengthy exposition, retaining only the gist of it. It is also interesting to note that by using the parenthetical sentence immediately after the word he corrected (*πράοις*) he seems to be correcting Elias, who had repeated the superlative *πρασιότοις* of the *Ladder* before embarking on his philological exposition on the supposed error of the scribe. Most of the rest of Nikephoros’ exposition seems to be paraphrasing Elias, who had himself simply paraphrased the *Ladder* (the provenance of the sentence τοῦτο γὰρ διὰ τῆς κέλλης ὑποδηλοῖ, which is incorporated in Nikephoros’ text in an awkward way just after the passage quoted above, is obscure, however).

It should be pointed out that in an important illuminated manuscript of the *Ladder*, Vat. gr. 394 of the last quarter of the 11th century, which also contains a significant number of marginal scholia on Climacus, the relevant scholion (f. 67r) runs as follows: Οἱ δοκοῦντες καὶ μὴ ὄντες, δικαίως νόθοι καὶ οὐ γνήσιοι οἱ δὲ νόθοι τῷ ὑπεροκεικῶ οὐ καλῶς διασημαίνονται ὅθεν σφαλῆναι τὸν γραφέα ἔστιν εἰπεῖν, ἀντὶ τοῦ πρόαις *πρασιότοις* γράψαντα. This scholion coincides with parts of Elias' text with few variations. Since the Vaticanus must be somewhat earlier than Elias, the two must share the same source, which Elias either reproduced more faithfully or expanded on his own (cf. below on examples 4–6).

The next two examples (nos. 4–5) come from Nikephoros' exegesis of Rung 26. I have mentioned in passing his comments in another article of mine, where I publish a few scholia by the Emperor Leo VI, including two scholia contained in the above-mentioned Vat. gr. 394 and explicitly attributed to him (the manuscript is a trustworthy witness as example no. 6 below shows).³⁷ I consider it useful for the purposes of the present article to take up Nikephoros' scholia again, and for each of the two Climacus passages concerned to present the exegeses of Nikephoros and Elias as well as the corresponding scholia in the Vaticanus and the PG (Rader) in tabulated form (see below, 162–165). Leo's scholia in the Vaticanus, in particular, are quoted according to my edition, but their lemmata are not given here in full. The quotations from the *Ladder* are again placed in italics. In both Tables the order of the scholia within each source is also noted.

4) Rung 26 (Περὶ διακρίσεως), PG 88, 1036BC: Ἐν τῶν κτισμάτων ἐν ἑτέρῳ καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ εἶναι εἴληφεν, καὶ θαῦμα πῶς ἐκτὸς τοῦ ἐν ᾧ τὸ εἶναι ἐκομίσαστο, συνίστασθαι πέφυκε. The relevant scholia are given in Table I.

It is noticed that Elias incorporated in his commentary the scholion (C) which in the Vaticanus is attributed to the Emperor Leo the Wise, but without the attribution. Nikephoros' last comment (C), which likewise lacks an attribution, turns out to be a summary of Leo's scholion, whereas the first lines of his exegesis (A) may be alluding to Elias' passage B; if so, Nikephoros would have known Leo's text via Elias and, therefore, anonymously.

³⁷ ANTONOPOULOU, Unpublished Scholia, esp. 27–31.

5) Rung 26, Περί διακρίσεως εὐδιακρίτου (*Tractatio de discreta discretionē*), PG 88, 1069A: Τρεῖς μὲν τις νύκτας ἐν γῆ πεποιηκῶς ἀνεβίω εἰς ἅπαν· ὁ δὲ τρεῖς ὥρας νενικηκῶς οὐκ ἀποθανεῖται λοιπόν. The scholia on this passage are given in Table II.

It is noteworthy that Elias (Laur., f. 273v–274r) goes on to explain the discrepancy between the three nights mentioned in Mt. 12, 40 and the two nights that Christ spent in Hades. Nikephoros did not concern himself with the issue, but perhaps implied it by changing John Climacus’ text τρεῖς νύκτας to τρεῖς ἡμέρας (see Table II, A; cf. Elias’ τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας, which repeats the Gospel text).

The evidence provided in Tables I and II makes it clear beyond any doubt that Nikephoros’ multiple exegesis in both cases is a mere compilation. He drew primarily on Elias, since most of his comments are found together in his predecessor. Possibly, he used other sources as well, as suggested, for example, by a comment of his which is not in Elias (Table II, F); these other sources were probably mostly anonymous manuscript scholia, such as those found in the Vaticanus. He modified his sources, mainly by shortening and simplifying them, leaving part of them out. Even if his source had preserved the name of a previous author, he did not take it over. He also made a few additions mainly by providing Scriptural quotations (Table II, A), paraphrasing the *Ladder* and introducing a few thoughts (Table I, B). In the case of the scholia attributed by the Vaticanus to Leo VI it seems again that Elias and the (probably earlier) Vaticanus shared the same or related source, but Elias made an effort to normalize the language of the text.

6) The passage from Rung 27 (Περί ἡσυχίας), PG 88, 1109BC Μετερχόμενος τὸ μέσον – εἰς ἅπαν οὐκ ἔχω is commented upon by Elias in Laur., f. 300v (= Coisl. 87, f. 272v–273r), and Nikephoros at p. 489, col. b. The Vaticanus mentioned above (as well as Hierosol. S. Crucis, 93, 13th cent.) attributes a long scholion on this passage to Patriarch Photius. It is scholion 11 among the patriarch’s scholia on the *Ladder*. Its authenticity is conveniently proved by the fact that it largely coincides with the authentic *Question 273* of the *Amphilochia*. There Photius seems to have re-used a random scholion of his on the *Ladder*, furnishing it with a preface and bringing about very few changes.³⁸

³⁸ See L.G. WESTERINK (ed.), Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia VI, 1. Amphilochiorum pars tertia, Leipzig 1987, 64–66 with his preface to the text. On Photius’ scholia see G. HOFMANN, Der hl. Johannes Klimax bei Photios. *OCP* 7 (1941) 461–479, esp. 464–470.

TABLE I

Nikephoros, p. 425, col. b – 426, col. a	Elias, Laur. IX, II, f. 260v	Vat. gr. 394, f. 122v	PG, 1056C Scholion LXXXI
<p>A) Τοῦτό πνεες εἰς τὴν πυρῆν ἐξελάβοντο λίθον· οὐ μὴν δὲ καλῶς φήθησαν·</p>	<p>B) Τινὲς δὲ φασὶ περὶ τοῦ πυρός τοῦτο λέγεσθαι· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι. Προσελθὼν γὰρ τὸ πῦρ ἐκ λίθου καὶ σιδήρου, οὐ δύναται μένειν χωρὶς ἐτέρας ὕλης·</p>		<p>B) Εἰ δὲ πνεες περὶ πυρός εἰρήσθαι τὸ ποικείμενον ὑπολαμβάνουσα ζήτημα, ἀπολαβόντων ὡς τοῦ φέροντος λίθου τε καὶ σιδήρου (γέννημα γὰρ τῶν δύο τούτων τὸ πῦρ) προσελθὼν οὐ δύναται μένειν χωρὶς ἐτέρας ὕλης· καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὴ τάχον δρώξασθαι πρὸς φθάσει τῶν φυλάσσειν αὐτὸ εἰδότων, εὐθὺς ἀπόλλυται· ἢ δὲ ψυχὴ μέχρι τῆς ἐτέρας ἐν Θεῷ συνδύσει αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον σῶμα ἐκδέχεται.</p>
<p>B) ἄλλα περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ λόγος τῷ ἁγίῳ· ἥτις ἐν οἷσιν καὶ αὐτὴ τῶν θεϊκῶν κτισμάτων, οὕτε καθ' ἑαυτὴν</p>	<p>ἢ δὲ ψυχὴ μέχρι τῆς ἐνόθεου συνδύσει αὐτῆς τῆς πρὸς τὸ σῶμα ἐκδέχεται καὶ ἔστι πάντως ...</p>	<p>A) Ταῦτα περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς λέγει·</p>	<p>A) Τὴν ψυχὴν, ὡς οἶμαι, λέγει·</p>
<p>προϋπέστη, οὕτε μεθυπέστη· ἐν ἑτέρῳ δὲ ἔχει τὸ εἶναι (ἥτοι τῷ σῶματι)· ἅμα γὰρ τῷ προοδῷ, τῷ σῶματι συγκρίττεται·</p>	<p>αὐτὴ γὰρ μὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν κτισθεῖσα, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ σῶματι ὑποστάσα, μετὰ τὸν χωρισμὸν συνίσταται πάλιν χωρὶς οἴματος· Οὕτε γὰρ προϋπέστη τοῦ σῶματος αὐτῆ, οὕτε μεθυπέστη, ἀλλ' ἅμα τῷ προοδῷ συγκρίττεται τοῦ σῶματος·</p>	<p>οὕτε γὰρ προϋπέστη τοῦ σῶματος αὐτῆς, οὕτε μεθυπέστη, ἀλλ' ἅμα τῷ γενέσει συγκρίττεται τοῦ σῶματος,</p>	<p>οὕτε γὰρ προϋπέστατα τοῦ σῶματος, οὕτε μεθυπέστατα, ἀλλ' ἅμα τῷ γενέσει τοῦτου κτίττεται καὶ αὐτῆ· ὅθεν φωνεῖς καὶ ὁ ἔμβρουον ἀπεκτακῶς· ἐπεὶ ἐν τῇ συλλήφει ἐψύχεται· τοσοῦτον δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐνεργεῖ τότε, ὅσον καὶ ἡ σῶμα· κατ' αὔξησιν γὰρ τὴν τοῦ σῶματος, καὶ αὐτὴ τὰς οἰκείας ἐνεργείας διαδείκνυσι.</p>
<p>τούτου δ' ἀξιάνοντος, καὶ αὐτὴ τὰς ἰδίας διαδείκνυσιν ἐνεργείας·</p>	<p>κατὰ τὴν αὔξησιν δὲ τοῦ σῶματος καὶ αὐτὴ τὰς (τῆς cod.) ἰδίας ἐνεργείας διαδείκνυσι.</p>	<p>οὐ κατ' αὔξησιν, καὶ αὐτὴ τὰς ἰδίας ἐνεργείας διαδείκνυται.</p>	

<p>καὶ <i>θαιμάτος</i> ὄντως ἄξιον· πῶς ἔχει φύσιν <i>συνίασθαι</i> μετὰ τὴν διάλυσιν, καθ’ ἑαυτὴν μένουσα <i>ἐκτός</i> τοῦ σώματος, ἐν ᾧ ἔσχε καὶ αὐτὴ τὴν οὐσίαν· χωρὶς γὰρ σώματος ψυχὴν γενέσθαι ἀδύνατον.</p>	<p>(C) Ἡ, καὶ τοῦτο <i>θαιμασόν</i>,</p>	<p><i>Θαῖμα</i> οὖν, φησί, πῶς ἢ ἐν τῷ σώματι λαβούσα τὸ <i>εἶναι</i>, μετὰ τὴν διάξευσιν γυμνὴ <i>πέφνε</i> στέγειν, ἦγον <i>συνίασθαι</i>· ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως ἀπόδειξις πάντως.</p>	<p>(C) Ἡ καὶ οὕτως· Ἐν πῶν <i>κτισμάτων</i>, ἡ ψυχὴ, ἐν <i>ἐτέρω</i>, τούτεστι ἐν σώματι, τὴν ὑπαρξιν <i>εἴληφεν</i>, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν <i>ἑαυτῇ</i> ὑφισταίνα δεδημιούργηται, ὥστε μονώτατον εἶναι, ἀλλ’ ἐν συζυγίᾳ τοῦ σώματος. Εἴτα <i>ἀποθιμιάζει</i> ὁ μακάριος λέγει· εἰ ἐν τῷ συζυγήναι ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σώματι, μετέλιπε <i>τοῦ εἶναι</i> – οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν προὔπστασα τοῦ σώματος – πῶς ἐν τῷ διαξενγυνοῦσθαι τῷ χωρισμῷ τοῦ θανάτου, οὐγί· καὶ αὐτὴ τὸ <i>εἶναι</i> ἀπόλλυσιν, ἀλλ’ ἔτι διαρκεῖ, ὑφισταμένη καθ’ ἑαυτὴν ἀτελεύτητος· Ὁ μὲν οὖν σκοπὸς οὕτως ἔχει, παιδεύει δὲ διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης θεωρίας μὴ καταμελεῖν μὲν τῆς ψυχῆς μάλλον διαρκούσης καὶ εἰς αἰῶνας ὑφισταμένης, περιποιηθῆαι δὲ τὸν ἐδιάλυτον χούν καὶ πρὸς τὸ μηδμη χουούνα· ὅστε οὐ δεῖ τῶν προσκαίρων καὶ ματαίων φείδεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἐπιστεῦδειν πρὸς τὴν τῶν αἰωνιζόντων ἀπόλαυσιν, ἅπανα τῇ ψυχῇ σύνεισι καὶ συνδιαμενοῦσι.</p>	<p><i>Θαῖμα</i> οὖν πῶς ἐν τῷ σώματι λαβούσα τὸ <i>εἶναι</i>, μετὰ τὴν διάξευσιν <γυμνῆ> <i>συνίασται</i>.</p>	<p>A) (... Λέοντος ...) Ἐν πῶν <i>κτισμάτων</i>, ἡ ψυχὴ, ἐν <i>ἐτέρω</i>, τούτεστι τῷ σώματι, τὴν ὑπαρξιν <i>εἴληφεν</i>, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν <i>ἑαυτῇ</i> ὑφισταίνα δεδημιούργηται, ὥστε μονώτατος εἶναι, ἀλλ’ ἐν συζυγίᾳ τοῦ σώματος. Εἴτα <i>ἀποθιμιάζει</i> ὁ μακάριος καὶ λέγει· ἐν τῷ συζυγήναι ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σώματι, μετέλιπε <i>τοῦ εἶναι</i> – οὐ γὰρ ἦν πρὸ ὑπστάσεως τοῦ σώματος – πῶς ἐν τῷ διαξενγυνοῦσθαι τῷ χωρισμῷ τοῦ θανάτου, οὐγί· καὶ αὐτὴ τὸ <i>εἶναι</i> ἀπόλλυσιν, ἀλλ’ ἔτι διαρκεῖ, ὑφισταμένη καθ’ ἑαυτὴν ἀτελεύτητα· Ὁ μὲν οὖν σκοπὸς οὕτως ἔχει, παιδεύει δὲ διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης θεωρίας μὴ καταμελεῖν μὲν τῆς ψυχῆς μάλλον διαρκούσης, εἰς αἰῶνα ὑφισταμένης, πε<ρι>ποιεῖσθαι δὲ τὸν ἐδιάλυτον χούν καὶ πρὸς τὸ μηδμη χουούνα· ὥστε οὐ δεῖ τῶν προσκαίρων καὶ ματαίων κίθεσθαι, ἀ πρὸς τὸ σῶμα συντελεῖ, ἀλλ’ ἐπιστεῦδειν περὶ τῆς τῶν ἀτελεύτητων καὶ αἰωνιζόντων ἀπολάσεως, ἅπανα τῇ ψυχῇ σύνεισι καὶ συνδιαμενοῦσι.</p>	<p><i>Θαῖμα</i> οὖν, φησί, πῶς ἢ ἐν τῷ σώματι λαβούσα τὸ <i>εἶναι</i>, <i>πέφνε</i> γυμνὴ μετὰ τὴν διάξευσιν στέγειν ἦτοι <i>συνίασθαι</i>· ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν τὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ δόγμα.</p>
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TABLE II

Nikephoros, p. 446, col. b – 447, col. a	Elias of Crete, Laur. IX, II, f. 273rv	Vat. gr. 394, ff. 128v-129r	PG 88, 1081A Scholion XXI
<p>A) Ὁ μὲν οὖν Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἐν γῆ ποιῆσας, ἀναστὰς εἰς τὸ δυνεκέες ζῆν θάνατος αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει (Rom. 6, 9). Ὁ δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν μιμούμενος, νικήσας τὰς τρεῖς ὡρας τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἡλικίας (ἵγουν τὴν ἔν νεότητι, τὴν μέσην καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ γῆρα), οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει τὸν ψυχικὸν ποτε θάνατον.</p> <p>B) Τινὲς τρεῖς ὡρας τρεῖς περιεπικράς ὡραιότητας τῶν παθῶν ἐνοήσαν (τὴν φιληθονίαν, τὴν φιλοδοξίαν καὶ τὴν φιλαργυρίαν) ταῦτα γὰρ τὶς νικήσας οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων παθῶν.</p>	<p>A) Ὁ μὲν οὖν Χριστὸς καὶ Θεὸς ἡμῶν τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς ὡρας ἐν γῆ πεποιηκώς, ἀνεβίω εἰς ἄπαν· ὁ δὲ χριστομίμητος τὴν τρίορον ἀμαρτίαν νικήσας, οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει· ὅρα δὲ τρεῖς εἶον, ἢ ἐν νεότητι, ἢ μέση καὶ ἢ ἐν γῆρα, ὡς καὶ τρεῖς φυλακὰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐκάλεσεν.</p> <p>B) Ἡ διὰ τῶν τριῶν ὡρῶν τὰς τρεῖς ὡραιότητας καλεῖ, λέγω δὴ τὴν ἡδονήν, τὴν κενοδοξίαν καὶ τὴν φιλαργυρίαν, ὡς ὁ νικήσας, συλλήβδην πάντα νενίκηκεν.</p>	<p>A) Ὁ μὲν Χριστὸς τρεῖς ὡρας ἐν γῆ πεποιηκώς ἀνεβίω· ὁ δὲ χριστομίμητος τὴν τρίορον ἀμαρτίαν νικήσας, οὐκ ἀποφραθεμίσει· ὅρα δὲ τρεῖς εἶον, ἢ τῆς νεότητος, ἢ μέση καὶ ἢ ἐν γῆρα, ὡς καὶ τρεῖς φυλακὰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐδηλώσεν.</p> <p>C) Ἄλλος δὲ τὰς τρεῖς ὡραιότητας φησιν, τὴν ἡδονήν, τὴν κενοδοξίαν καὶ τὴν φιλαργυρίαν, ὡς ὁ νικήσας, συλλήβδην πάντα νενίκηκεν.</p>	<p>B) Τινὲς τὰς τρεῖς ὡρας τῆς ἡλικίας ἦτοι τὴν ἐν νεότητι, τὴν ἐν μέση καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ γῆρα·</p> <p>C) Ἄλλος τὴν ἡδονήν, τὴν κενοδοξίαν, καὶ τὴν φιλαργυρίαν·</p>
<p>C) Ἄλλοι τοῖσρον τὸν δαίμονα τῆς ἀκηρίας ἐνόησαν· ὅς καὶ τοῖσρος φρίκη κέκληται.</p>	<p>C) Ἐλεγε δὲ τις τῶν πατέρων ὅτι τοῖα φοβοῦμαι, τὴν ἀποδημίαν τοῦ βίου, καὶ πῶς ὀφθήσομαι τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ πῶς ἐν τῇ κρίσει καταλεγῆσομαι.</p> <p>D) Ἄλλοι τὸν τῆς ἀκηρίας δαίμονα διὰ τῶν τριῶν ὡρῶν νενόησαν, ὅς καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις τρεῖσρος φρίκη κέκληται.</p>	<p>B) Ἡ τοῦτο ἔστιν, ὅπερ τις (sic cod.) τῶν πατέρων ἔλεγεν, ὅτι τοῖα φοβοῦμαι, τὴν ἀποδημίαν τοῦ βίου, καὶ πῶς ὀφθήσομαι τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ πῶς ἐν τῇ κρίσει ταρήσομαι.</p> <p>cf. supra, A) ἀκηρίαν</p>	<p>A) Τοῖα φοβοῦμαι, τὶς τῶν Πατέρων ἔφη· τὴν ἀποδημίαν τοῦ βίου καὶ πῶς ὀφθήσομαι τῷ Θεῷ καὶ πῶς ἐν τῇ κρίσει καταλεγῆσομαι.</p> <p>E) ἄλλος τὴν ἀκηρίαν, ὡς καὶ ἄλλαχού, τρεῖσρον φρίκη.</p>

<p>D) Ἔστι δὲ νοήσια καὶ τρεῖς ὥρας· πρώτην μὲν, τὴν κατ' ἀρχάς τῶν ἀγώνων διαμονικὴν ἐπιθεῖαν· δευτέραν, τὴν ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τῆς ἀσκήσεως· καὶ τρίτην, τὴν πρὸς τὸ τέλος τοῦ βίου.</p>	<p>E) Ἡ καὶ οὕτως νοήσεις τὸ τρίτον τὴν προσβολὴν τοῦ δαίμονος· τὸ καταδέξασθαι ταύτην καὶ μὴ ἐνοπήναι· δεύτερον, τὸ ἐνηρόνως κατέχειν τὸ ἐνθύμιον· τρίτην, τὸ πεισθῆναι πράξει· ὑψ' ὧν ὁ ἐπιβουλευόμενος καὶ μὴ ἠττηθεῖ, ἀλλὰ τὸν πειραστὴν καταγωνισάμενος, τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς τὸν στέφανον ἀναδίσταται.</p>	<p>F) Ἡ καὶ οὕτως· ὁ τρεῖς ὥρας ἐγκατενόησας ἐν καιρῷ τοῦ ὀξέως πάθους καὶ μὴ εὐθὺς ἐνδοῦς, ἀλλὰ γνωσιμαχίῃσας, Θεοῦ συναφορμένου νικήσει καὶ ὑπερβιδήσει τὸ πρὸς ὁ περιφύζεται.</p>
<p>F) Καὶ ἄλλως δὲ τὸ τρίτον τῆς ὥρας νοήσεις· πρώτην τὴν καταρχάς τῶν ἀγώνων τοῦ δαίμονος ἐπιθεῖαν, δευτέραν <τὴν ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τῆς ἀσκήσεως, καὶ τρίτην τὴν πρὸς τῷ τέλει τοῦ βίου, καθὼς εἴρηται τῷ ὄφει· Καὶ οὐ τηρήσεις> (Coisl. 87, f. 252r) αὐτοῦ πτέρων, τὸ ἐξαγατὸν φημι τῆς ἐκάστου τῶν ἀνθρώπων ζωῆς.</p>	<p>E) Ἡ τρεῖς ὥρας, τὰς τρεῖς κατὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου νοεὶ μοι προσβολάς τοῦ δαίμονος, ἐν αἷς ἠπτώμενος, τὸν ψυχικὸν ὑφίσταται θάνατον· πρώτην μὲν τὸ καταρχάς μὴ ἐνοπήναι πρὸς ἀποτροπὴν τῆς μυσταρίας προσβολῆς, ἀλλὰ καταδέξασθαι τὴν παραδοχὴν, δευτέραν δὲ τὸ ἐνηρόνως κατέχειν τὸ ἐνθύμιον, τρίτην τὸ πεισθῆναι καὶ πράξει· ὑψ' ὧν ὁ ἐπιβουλευόμενος μὴ ἠττηθεῖς, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀντέχεσθαι τῆς ἀρετῆς, τὸν δαίμονα καταγωνισάμενος, τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς τὸν στέφανον ἀναδίσταται.</p>	<p>E) Ἄλλως, (... Λέοντος ...) <i>Τρεῖς ὥρας</i>, τὰς τρεῖς κατὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου νοεὶ μοι τοῦ δαίμονος προσβολάς, ἐν αἷς ἠπτώμενος, τὸν ψυχικὸν ὑφίσταται θάνατον· πρώτην μὲν τὸ μὴ ἐνοπήναι καταρχάς πρὸς ἀποτροπὴν τῆς μυσταρίας ἐπιβουλῆς ἢ προσβολῆς, ἀλλὰ καταδέξασθαι τὴν παραδοχὴν, δευτέραν δὲ τὸ ἐνηρόνως κατεχεῖν τὸ ἐνθύμιον, τρίτην τὸ πεισθῆναι καὶ πράξει· ὧν ὁ ἐπιβουλευόμενος μὴ ἠττηθεῖς, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀντέχεσθαι τῆς ἀρετῆς, τὸν δαίμονα καταγωνισάμενος, τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς τὸν στέφανον ἀναδίσταται.</p>
<p>E) Καὶ ἄλλως δὲ τὸ τρίτον τῆς ὥρας νοήσεις· πρώτην τὴν καταρχάς τῶν ἀγώνων τοῦ δαίμονος ἐπιθεῖαν, δευτέραν τὴν ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ἀσκήσεως, τρίτην τὴν πρὸς τῷ τέλει τοῦ βίου, καθὼς εἴρηται τῷ ὄφει· Καὶ οὐ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρων.</p>	<p>D) Ἄλλως τὰς τρεῖς προσβολάς τοῦ δαίμονος·</p>	

This scholion was reproduced verbatim by Elias, again without acknowledgment of its provenance.³⁹ It constitutes the beginning of his commentary on the same passage of John Climacus as that indicated by the title of Photius' *Question*. It is followed by an ὄτι, which marks the beginning of another scholion. The Vaticanus offers on the whole, though not always, a better text than Elias, whose commentary has preserved other scholia of Photius on the *Ladder* as well.⁴⁰ Since it has become clear by now that Nikephoros knew and used Elias, it can be concluded that he chose to omit this difficult text.

A similar case is that of Rung 24 (Περὶ πραότητος), PG 981B Θυμώδης καὶ εἴθων – λανθάνειν δοχοῦσα, on which Rader published a scholion attributed to Evagrius (PG 985AB Σχόλιον Εὐαγρίου δ'). The text comes from Evagrius indeed (*Practicus*, chapter 24). A look at Elias (Laur., f. 214r = Coisl. 87, f. 209r) shows that he incorporated this passage in his commentary verbatim, once more without indication of its provenance. Nikephoros omitted this passage as well.⁴¹

7) As mentioned above, Politis showed that Nikephoros' commentary was different from Elias'. To demonstrate this he published two excerpts from Elias that "were not among the most characteristic" and argued that in these cases "both commentaries repeat more or less the text of the *Ladder*", whereas in other chapters they "are completely different".⁴² The passages in question concern the third Rung

³⁹ Part of Photius' scholion (= *Qu.* 273, p. 65, 16–24) was printed by Rader (= PG 1120D–1121A) as Τοῦ Ἐλίου. On the passage of the *Ladder* in question and its Byzantine scholiasts, see J. GOULLARD, Un ravissement de Jean Climaque: extase ou artifice didactique?, in: Byzantium. Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos II. Theology and Philology. Athens 1986, 445–459.

⁴⁰ See HOFMANN, *Der hl. Johannes Klimax* 478.

⁴¹ The Evagrius text is followed in PG by a scholion attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus. This is a more complicated case than the scholion from Evagrius. It runs as follows (PG 985B): Θυμὸν χαλίνου, μὴ φρενῶν ἔξω πέσης· κόλαζε τὸν θυμὸν, μανίας γὰρ ἔστι πατὴρ τὸ μέτρον ἔξερχόμενος. The first part (Θυμὸν – πέσης) comes from the *Carmina Moralia* of Gregory of Nazianzus (poem 30, v. 8, PG 37, 909A), while κόλαζε τὸν θυμὸν is an adaptation of θυμὸς κολαζόμενος from Gregory's *Or.* 19, PG 35, 1052B. For μανίας – ἔξερχόμενος more distant parallels in Gregory's works can be found. Elias, Laur., f. 214r (= Coisl. 87, f. 209r), has only κόλαζε – ἔξερχόμενος. The passage is not in Nikephoros. It is probable that the anonymous compiler mentioned above (cf. n. 33) attached the Gregory citation to a phrase of Elias that echoed Gregory.

⁴² POLITIS, Ἄγνωστο ἔργο 75; Elias' passages are published on p. 80–81.

(Περὶ ξενιτείας), PG 88, 664CD ἄλλους μὲν σῶσαι – πλαζόμενος and Ὁ κόσμος – φιλεπίστροφα εἶναι.

In the first case, although Politis is right that both later commentators remained close to the vocabulary of Climacus, the dependence of Nikephoros on Elias is evident in his repetition of a couple of explanations, namely: a) Nikephoros (p. 93, col. a) explains the γυρετὴν δαίμονα as ὡς **τοὺς ξένους** διήθεν **γυρεύοντα ἢ γὰρ ξενιτεία** τὴν τοῦ γυρεύειν ἡμᾶς **δίδωσιν ἀφορμὴν**; cf. Elias (Laur., f. 44v) *ἢ γὰρ ξενιτεία ἀφορμὴν αὐτῷ δίδωσι περικυκλοῦν καὶ γυρεύειν τοὺς ξένους*; and b) Nikephoros (p. 93, col. a) explains ἀπροσπάθεια as **τὸ μὴ προσπαθῶς ἔχειν**, which is taken over from Elias (Laur., f. 44v).

In the second case (Nikephoros, p. 93, col. a; Elias, Laur., f. 45r) there is almost no lexical dependence (although they both employ ἐκτροπή towards the material world). Nikephoros’ explanation is shorter and quite straightforward compared to Elias’ more elevated style, yet it remains close to him in sense (compare e.g. Nikephoros’ explanation of κόσμος as τὴν εἰς τὰς πόλεις διατριβὴν with Elias’ τὸν συρφετώδη ὄχλον).

8) Let me give a final example. In Rung 24 (Περὶ πραότητος) John Climacus gives a series of definitions of πονηρία, including the word ιδιογνωμόρυσθος (PG 981C). Nikephoros (p. 358, col. a) comments: ὁ γὰρ **στοιχῶν τῇ ἰδίᾳ γνώμῃ καὶ μὴ ἀνεχόμενος ὑπὸ** καθηγητῆ καὶ ποιμένι τάττεσθαι **καὶ ῥυθμιζεσθαι**, οὕτω καλεῖται κανόνα καὶ στάθμη καὶ **ῥυθμόν, ἑαυτὸν ἠγούμενος**. Elias (Laur., f. 215r) has: *ιδιογνωμόρυσθον* ἐνταῦθα λέγει τὸν μὴ ἀνεχόμενον ὑφ’ ἐτέρων γνώμην λαμβάνειν καὶ ῥυθμιζεσθαι ὑπ’ αὐτῶν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἰδίᾳ γνώμῃ στοιχοῦντα καὶ ῥυθμόν ἑαυτὸν ἠγούμενον. It turns out that Nikephoros has narrowed Elias’ general and easily misunderstood ὑφ’ ἐτέρων down to ὑπὸ καθηγητῆ καὶ ποιμένι.

In the following sentence John Climacus speaks of πονηρός as διαβόλου συνόμιλος καὶ συνώνυμος. Nikephoros (p. 358, col. a–b) comments on συνώνυμος: καὶ κοινωνῶν αὐτῷ καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος, κατ’ αὐτὸ μόνον τὸ τῆς πονηρίας ὄνομα: οὐ κατὰ φύσιν. Ἦ τὸ *συνώνυμος* ἀντὶ τοῦ **ὁμώνυμος**: τὰ γὰρ συνώνυμα, καὶ τῆς φύσεως κοινωνοῦσι καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος: τὰ δὲ ὁμώνυμα, τοῦ ὀνόματος μόνον. The comment of Elias (Laur., f. 215r) is: ὁ πονηρός γὰρ φησιν οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἀλλ’ ὡς πονηρός ἀπλῶς διαβόλου ἐστὶ *συνόμιλος καὶ συνώνυμος*: εἰ γὰρ ὡς ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον σκοπήσεις, οὐ συνώνυμος ἔσται τῷ διαβόλῳ ἀλλ’ ὁμώνυμος μᾶλλον ἐκεῖθεν λεγόμενος, and again (f. 215v) τοῦτον δὲ τὸν πονηρὸν ὁμωνύμως ἀλλ’ οὐ συνωνύμως πρὸς τὸν διάβολον νοητέον λέγεσθαι. Therefore, Nikephoros

repeats the main argument of Elias and further clarifies its meaning (Elias' οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρωπος ἀλλ' ὡς πονηρὸς ἀπλῶς becomes οὐ κατὰ φύσιν and κατ' αὐτὸ μόνον τὸ τῆς πονηρίας ὄνομα respectively), adding a philological explanation of the difference between homonyms and synonyms.

I have here confined myself to a few examples that, in my view, on the one hand illustrate the case of Nikephoros' heavy dependence on his sources, Elias in particular, and on the other, show clearly that he did not restrict himself to slavishly copying the older scholiasts. A full analysis of the sources of the *Exegesis Syntomos* is the work of the future, as it would either have to await the publication of Elias and the medieval Greek scholia on the *Ladder*, or to be based on (at least a reasonable choice of) unpublished manuscript material, the extent of which is difficult to estimate given the rich manuscript tradition of the *Ladder*. The task is complicated by the fact that, as I have suggested, Elias is not wholly original and does not always name his sources. It is also clear that despite its volume Nikephoros' *Exegesis* is indeed *syntomos*, namely brief in comparison with Elias. Nikephoros appears to have worked through all the material on which he could lay his hands and which he made a selection of, abbreviated, paraphrased, corrected, clarified and expanded himself.⁴³

⁴³ We have a clear picture of the sources of Nikephoros' Ecclesiastical History, and the problem of its originality has been studied in relative detail; see G. GENTZ – F. WINKELMANN, *Die Kirchengeschichte des Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus und ihre Quellen (TU 98)*. Berlin 1966. The former bleak picture of the author as a mere compiler has been enhanced by insisting on the way he used, adapted or combined his multifarious sources so as to serve his original conception of his work, as well as by focussing on the function of the History within contemporary ecclesiastical and political reality; see WINKELMANN, *Bedeutung*, with literature. So far similar ambition is not evident in his commentaries. However, the Ecclesiastical History was the culmination of Nikephoros' activity as a writer, and he worked on it for a long time, starting when he was “not yet 36 years old” until late in his life (PG 145, 609C. 620C), though perhaps not after ca. 1320, when Vind. hist. gr. 8, the *codex unicus* of the completed part of the History, was written; see WINKELMANN, *Bedeutung* 441–442; on the codex and its importance, see GENTZ – WINKELMANN, *Kirchengeschichte* 1–2.