

WHEN TO BE SILENT AND WHY HAVING FRIENDS? AN ANALYSIS OF THE TREATY *DE OFFICIIS* FROM AMBROSE OF MILAN (4TH CENTURY A.D)

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Abstract

In the end of the 4th Century A.D, Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (374-397 A.D), was one of the authors that used his abilities in the protection of the catholic Christianity and in the elaboration of pertinent behaviors to the catholic Christians, including the clergymen. In this article, I investigate some of the conducts that the Milanese requested from these clergymen. Such analysis has its main document the ambrosian treaty *De officiis*. I wonder why the author exhorted the public from this work to remain silent and preserve fellowship? For the proposed analysis in this work, I consider that practice and theory are inseparable in the construction of examples of conduct and that this binding was present in the ambrosian work.

Keywords

Ambrose of Milan; catholic Christianity; fellowship; silence; tradition.

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Resumo

No final do século IV d.C., Ambrósio, bispo de Milão (374-397 d.C.), foi um dos autores que empregou suas habilidades na proteção do cristianismo católico e na elaboração de comportamentos pertinentes aos cristãos católicos, inclusive aos clérigos. Neste artigo, investigo algumas das condutas que o milanês requeria destes clérigos. Tal análise tem como documento principal o tratado ambrosiano *De officiis*. Pergunto-me por que o autor exortou o público desta obra a permanecer em o silêncio e preservar a amizade? Para a análise proposta neste trabalho, considero que prática e teoria são inseparáveis na construção de modelos de conduta e que esta vinculação estava presente na obra ambrosiana.

Palavras-chave

Ambrósio de Milão; cristianismo católico; amizade; silêncio; tradição.

From father to son

The acceptance of Christianity as one of the roman religions, proclaimed by Constantine I and Licinius in the Edict of Milan of 313 A.D.², has strengthened the realization of councils and the elaboration of works partially by ecclesiastic authors that tried to establish guidelines to what it meant to “be a christian” and determine behaviours to the clergymen that would be the leaders of these religious communities. On the second half of the 4th Century, Ambrose, bishop of Milan (374-397), was one of these authors that placed its speaking and writing skills to defend the catholic belief as being the true christian faith.

On this path, the Milanese redacted several works conventionally classified in four categories: exegetical, dogmatical, ascetic-ethical and several (sermons, hymns, and letters) (Davidson, 1992: 21). *De officiis*, the book that guides the proposed analysis on this article, is an ascetic-ethical treaty on which the bishop sought, specially, to normalize the conduct of the cleric that surrounded him. The combat to luxury and greed, memorable on this treaty, has evidenced the influence that the stoic philosophy had over its author. What was not exclusive of the ambrosian thought, whereas, since the origins of the movements of the followers of Jesus, the stoicism helped to formulate the beliefs of these communities. The apostle Paul himself discoursed in several stoic schools of Athens (*Atos* 17, 16-34). On the Greco-Roman scenarios, the stoicism formulated “certain truths” the ones that the Christianity added others (Thamin, 1895: 443). According to Raymond Thamin (1895: 218), the stoic ethic returned to the ambrosian purposes and was put to a psychology that grounded the books of the bishop.

The use of reason and the control of the passions, stoic guidelines by excellence, were requested several times by the Milanese priest³. Besides, throughout all its work, the author exhorted its audience to make moral practices, specially based on prudence, justice, force, and temperance⁴. A life grounded in virtues was also demanded of those who dedicated themselves to the Stoicism. I do not desire, on this article, to investigate

² The dates of this article refer to the Common Era, that is why, from this moment on, I shall dispense the abbreviation “A.D” in my text. The exceptions will be marked by the abbreviation “B.C”.

³ To quote only two passages: *Amb., De Off.*, I, 21, 97: “*Cavere igitur debemus, ne in perturbationes prius incidamus, quam animos nostros ratio componat.*”; I, 24, 105: “*Si enim appetitus rationi obediatur.*”

⁴ *Amb., De Off.*, I, 24, 115: “*Quod his viris principalium virtutum officium defuit? Quarum primo loco constituerunt prudentiam [...]; secundo justitiam[...]; tertio fortitudinem [...]; quarto temperantiam.*”

thoroughly the influence of the stoic ethic on the ambrosian text, however, to understand the ideas of the author I must know its context and its formation. Therefore, to expand the understanding of the christian thought of Ambrose I need to consider that its arguments were bonded to the stoic ideas and practices inherent to that community on which the bishop was composed.

De officiis was written between 386 and 390⁵, years on which Valentinian II was the emperor of these western-roman territories and that the bonds between the bishop and the ruler were narrow, specially after the episodes of the “Conflict of the Minsters” (385-386)⁶. Even in these years, occurred some confrontations between the Milanese obedientary and Theodosius, emperor of the eastern territories of the Empire. In other words, apart from the religious issues, the bishop dealt with essential political subjects to the expansion and conservation of its interactive spaces and, consequently, of its puissance spaces. On this juncture, promulgating the ideals of its belief, teaching its audience to be Christian and educating the clergymen to be role models and leaders were important strategies to the legitimacy of the episcopal power. I do not exclude here, the trust and the feelings that the Milanese brought with himself by elaborating and proclaiming its speeches. However, these aspects escape my historiographical approach that is centered in a political-cultural scope.

On the moment that was dedicated to the redaction of *De officiis*, Ambrose already took part of the episcopal chair more than ten years ago and knew the problems and benefits that the attitudes of the clergymen brought to the defended religion, the Catholic Christianity. This treaty is taken as the first monography of Christian ethic and is one of the most important texts of the Patristics, being quite divulgated during the Middle Ages (Castillo, 2001: 299).

On this treaty, the Milanese reserved part of its attention to a wider audience, by demonstrating its concern, for example, with the rescue of prisoners (Amb. *De Off.*, II, 15, 70-71), with the offered mistreatment to the foreigners (Amb., *De Off.*, III, 7), with the greed of the traders (Amb., *De Off.*, III, 9, 57-58) and with the frauds of the contracts (Amb., *De Off.*, III, 10-11). Arguments that proved that the concern of the bishop with the moral

⁵ The date of redaction of this work is not grantable between the students of Ambrose. I recognize the proposed dating by Maurice Testard, Domingo Ramos-Lissón and Ivor John Davidson (Testard, 1984: 49; Ramos-Lissón, 2015: 15; Davidson, 1992: 29).

⁶ About the “Conflict of the Minsters” see McLynn, 1994: 170-196.

of its community. However, most part of the teachings presented by the Milanese were turned to the formation of clergymen.

Among the several principles that the Milanese demanded from the clergymen, I highlight the silence and the bonds of fellowship. Why a versed author in oratory and rhetoric, that valued the use of words on the teachings, required the silence of religious leaders? What type of conviviality the Milanese promoted or disapproved by exalting fellowship? These questions and the notion that practice and theory are inseparable in the construction of models of conduct guided the proposed analysis on this article.

The treaty *De officiis* of the classic orator Marcus Tullius Cicero was the main inspiration to the homonym work of Ambrose. Just like Cicero addressed his book to his son, Cratippus, the Milanese composed its version to its ecclesiastic children: "And just like Tullius did to educate his son, I also do it to inform ye, that are my children."⁷ On this affirmation, the author assumed the position of father, therefore, was the leader of that group which he wrote. His audience were its children, in other words, those who should respect the proposed hierarchy and obey its father, just like happened in the Roman civic abodes, where the children obeyed to the holder of the *pater familias*. On this manner, the Milanese not just protected its space of leadership but also fortified the idea of a wider family that were beyond the blood ties and regional particularities. A speech that, on the other hand, carried with itself the notion of catholicity craved by the Catholic Christianity.

It is certain that the Ambrosian audience of this work was the cleric. Ivor John Davidson verifies that, in this work, the most utilized term by the author to direct its hearing was "clergymen", although, several times, it was particularly referred to the deacons, elders and priests. This last term was used to attend the priests or elders and the episcopal occupation. Ambrose "embraces all ranks of clergy in this teaching" (Davidson, 1992: 39).

The role of father assumed by the bishop, just like the use of verbs "educate" (*erudio*) and "inform" (*informo*) (Amb., *De Off.*, I, 7, 24) highlighted, right in the beginning of its work, the intention that the author had to teach its audience how to be a faithful Christian and how to evangelize. This elaboration resumed the first phrase of the treaty: "I do not think to be arrogant, if among children, to receive the disposition of the

⁷ Amb., *De Off.*, I, 7, 24: "Et sicut Tullius ad erudiendum filium, ita ego quoque ad vos informandos filios meos."

teaching.”⁸ This educator tone was present in all its work, what reinforced the ambrosian authority and, concomitantly, its sociopolitical space, once that erected in its surroundings a group which highlighted as a leader. I observed that the episcopal power needed to be constantly nurtured, seen that Ambrose lived in a context on which many leaders requested for its beliefs the notion of being “the true Christian faith”. Simultaneously, this ambrosian speech generated and/or sustained behaviors that should be followed or rejected by its public. An elaboration that assisted in the identification of such group as the Christian Catholic, defender of the Divine Trinity, and lead by Ambrose.

“With the silence, you can be safe”⁹

Among the demanded behaviors from the catholic cleric by the Milanese priest was the silence. However, the bishop was a constant orator and promotor of the hymns during its masses. Knew, therefore, the power that the spoken word had in the calling of his faith and in the diffusion of the ideals that protected it. So, when the silence was imperative and requested by Ambrose?

For him, it was the silence that guaranteed the safety, while the utterance led to damnation: “What need do you have to speed to the danger of the damnation, uttering; when, with the silence, you can be safe.”¹⁰ The Milanese rejected the impulse utterance, inappropriate. To prevent mistakes and addicting attitudes, the author admonished the silence. I notice, however, that the attention to silence craved by Ambrose was not a novelty between the philosophical and religious circles.

Vanderley Nascimento Freitas (2016) affirms that Plutarch praised the silence in the search for the good life. According to Freitas (2016: 11), to that Greek historian and philosopher, the silence appeared as a treatment to the injured soul by the passions. Eni Orlandi (2007: 62) observed that Socrates mentioned to the importance of silence to reach the knowledge and Pythagoras stablished, minimally, a year of silence to the one that wished to join its circle. I realize, however, that among the ancient Greek, the silence had a prominent place among those who sought the reflection. In

⁸ *Amb., De Off., I, 7, 24: “Non arrogans videri arbitror, si inter filios suscipiam affectum docendi.”*

⁹ *Amb., De Off., I, 2, 5: “Cum tacendo possis esse tutior.”*

¹⁰ *Amb., De Off., I, 2, 5: “Quid opus est igitur ut properes periculum suscipere condemnationis, loquendo; cum tacendo possis esse tutior?”*

the roman world, the stoic Epictetus (*Encheiridion*, 33) had already guided its disciples to remain quiet and, if necessary, speaking a few words.

Ambrose, even, clarified that the silence could not be a product of apathy and that existed a correct moment to be quiet and another to speak, as recommended in *Ecclesiastes* 3, 7 (Amb., *De Off.*, I, 3, 9). For the Milanese, the silence should not be otiose, this act should have a purpose.

Orlandi suggests that “when we do not talk, we are not just speechless, we are in silence: there is the ‘thought’, the introspection, the contemplation, etc.” (Orlandi, 2007: 35). The act of being quiet potentializes the audition of yourself and the other and it is part of the experiences of the human beings. Under this point of view, by requesting the silence, Ambrose proposed that its audience dedicated themselves to the contemplation and to think before acting, what could contribute for the reorganization of the human experiences, based, then, in the teachings of the bishop himself and from that faith that he deemed truthful.

Besides the audience itself, by praising the silence, the bishop promoted, among their own, the audience of others. This was one of the paths to the novitiate. According to Ambrose (*De Off.*, I, 2, 7), for a young man to correct its path, it was firstly required to be silent and listen, then he would hear the words of God. Although the clergymen were, in majority erudite, they have been created in a society on which only a few had accesses to literature. On this context, the knowledge of rules, of “good” and “bad” tidings depended on the audience. I recall that, besides the clergymen, the treaty *De officiis* was reserved to a wider audience, that not always domain the written letters. I observe, however, that both the erudite and unlettered understood the need to listen to others.

Given the above, I point out the price of the “silent negotiator” (*negotium silentium*) promoted by Ambrose (*De Off.*, I, 3, 9). The bishop gave three examples of this type of silence: Susan, Joaquin’s wife, has been falsely accused of adultery and decided to be quiet and prey to God instead of talking against your whistleblowers; David, who guarded his tongue; and Jesus, that was quiet when accused of destroying the temple of God to rebuilt it. On the first two cases, the attitudes of Susan and David demonstrate a benefic silence in service of God. On the case of Jesus, according to the Christian literature, its silence would be responsible for the salvation of the human beings. Therefrom, Ambrose connected these silences to negotiation, the experiences of action, not inactivity. Therefore, even requesting silence, the Milanese urged its audience to act on behalf of the Christian God and the Catholic faith.

Although the teachings written down in *De officiis* were part of a theoretical outline that strengthened the validity of the catholic belief, they demanded constant practices of the clergymen and from the Christian congregation. Thus, I observe the importance of the bonding between theory and practice for the legitimation of this speech and for the propagation of the religion. On the one hand, the theory exposed in this treaty claimed actions. On the other hand, the shared experiences by that community on which Ambrose was inserted, would have driven him to reflect and formulate theories for its audience. Even the exalted silence by the Milanese was an action.

This “silent negotiator” could still evince, according to Ambrose, the virtue of humility. On his Book I of the treaty *De officiis* (I, 48), the bishop requested that Paul and David, by remaining quiet while offended, show its humility, an imitated virtue of Christ in accordance with the Christian literature. The Book I of this ambrosian treaty began with the humility and ended with the forgiveness, two Christian virtues that combined all the elements of the Stoicism (Thamin, 1895: 209). Therefore, the bishop brought to its arguments common mores to the Greek-roman tradition, important principles for the support of a determined sociopolitical order. On the works of ecclesiastical authors, like Ambrose, such mores had befitting interpretations with the objects of the speeches elaborated by these writers. On the cases of Paul and David, highlighted by the Milanese, this humility had been evidenced by the silence of the characters. Once again, I observe the weaving between theory and practice, amongst examples recovered from the Scriptures, reorganized by the bishop on its text and the demanding of the practice of silence and demonstration of the humility. These elaborations, prepared in the episcopal speech, generated models of behavior and imposed Silence as one of the duties of its clergymen.

Despite Ambrose inspiring in ciceronian books, I noticed that the Milanese constantly selected its examples of documents considered holy for the Christians. Such examples were, amongst others, Christ, David, Paul, and Susan previously quoted in this article. The classic orator, on the other hand, has used examples of the history of the romans and worried with the present events that ravaged the Republic (Thamin, 1895: 196-199). Motivated by legitimizing its belief in its context and strengthening it to the future, Ambrose, in turn, created adequate models to its goals and inspired in literature and in the Christian culture that defended, showing its concern, specially, with the salvation of the cleric and the Christian congregation in the afterlife.

In this fortuity the arguments of ambrosian authority were linked to the tradition of the Scriptures, once the bishop deemed that “its sacred

provenance overcomes the natural wisdom” (Pinheiro, 2013: 299). According to the priest, “The Holy Scripture is the feast for the wisdom”¹¹, therefore, it was the sovereign document on the apprenticeship of the Christians. On the Book III of his treaty *De Officiis*, Ambrose stood out several times the superiority of the examples from the Scriptures as related to the Ciceronian (Davidson, 1992: 47). By seeking references in ancient and ingrained documents to the tradition, the author proved its arguments, it strengthened its speech and expanded the validity of its belief. Besides, exalting ideas and characters already known by its audience facilitated the assimilation of the message and the proposed models by the Milanese.

For Ambrose (*De Off.*, I, 4-5), the silence was, yet an arm against the invisible and visible enemies. Those were the demons, identified in the ambrosian treaty by the term *adversarius* (I, 4, 15-16), an expression utilized by many ecclesiastical authors to refer to this figure. For the Milanese (*De Off.*, I, 4), once that many could not see the demon, the vigilance of the mouth should be constant so that the wrath desired by the enemy could not be achieved. According to the bishop (*De Off.*, I, 5, 17), the wrath, also, could be randy by visible enemies, in other words, by men and women that caused losses and awakened irritancies. These individuals received the appellation of “sinners” partially by the author. Once again, the practice of silence was the solution for the Ambrosian audience could not give in to the demon nor being equal to the evil examples.

As far as dealing with the invisible and visible enemies, the Milanese interposed the passions and the reason. On one hand, the passions, represented, amongst other elements, by the wrath, was linked to the enemies, to evil, to the wrong attitudes and that should be avoided. On the other hand, the silence nourished the use of reason and the practice of correct mores. For the Milanese, however, there were two principles of action: the reason and the passions. Once again, the Ambrosian arguments resumed principles of the stoic ethic to answer pertinent questions to the Christian ambience and stablish behavioural guidelines to the community lead by Ambrose. Thus, disseminated elements and widely accepted within a different roman culture were complemented and requested as principles of the catholic faith and started to integrate discursive elaborations that legitimated such belief and imposed conducts for clergymen and followers of this faith.

¹¹ Amb., *De Off.*, I, 32, 165: “*Scriptura divina convivium sapientiae est.*”
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“The benevolence is the driving force of fellowship”¹²

Another Ciceronian treaty that inspired *De officiis* of the Milanese bishop was the work *De amicitia*. Redacted by Cicero in 44 B.C. and dedicated to its friend Atticus, this text exposed the idea that the fellowship surpassed death, seen that it was possible to reach eternity through the memory of the dead. According to Laura Corso de Estrada, in *De amicitia*, after the death of Scipio Aemilianus and the wisdom of Socrates, Cicero examined “in a context properly Hellenistic of the stoic tradition [...] if death is an ill” (Corso de Estrada, 2020: 144). Certainly, amongst the inherited elements of the Greek culture, the concept of Aristotelean *philia* -that alluded to the practical nature of the fellowship - was also present in the text of the classic roman orator (Guastini, 2009: 36). In accordance with José Cretella Júnior (1999: 108), despite not affiliating to no philosophical school, the writings of Cicero combined aspects of the Platonism with elements of the Aristotelianism and Stoicism.

This ways of understanding the world have influenced the ambrosian thought - and not just due to the works of Cicero, since the bishop received, first in Trier and then in Rome, an adequate formation to the young ones who developed public actions. However, when I talk about influences, I have in mind that traditional elements and literary notions were reworked by Ambrose to promote certain behaviors and attending to the goals of this author. The bishop did not propose the same type of fellowship exalted by the orator follower of Greco-Roman beliefs in the 1st Century B.C. However, he sought in the Ciceronian treaty valid basis to its speech. Thus, bit by bit, the Milanese elaborated its theory about the duties and conducts of the cleric and the Nicene Christian Congregation. A theory that, obviously, Ambrose wished that were transformed in practical actions.

For the bishop (*De Off.*, I, 33, 172), the fellowship proceeded from benevolence, that is why a person would be capable of enduring deadly perils for a friend. Benevolence was one of the constituent elements of ciceronian fellowship: “the fellowship was nothing more, effectively, than a perfect understanding of all the things, divine and human, followed by benevolence and mutual charity”¹³. I realize that the practice of benevolence on the relations of fellowship craved by Cicero was still essential for the roman community on which Ambrose acted as a leader

¹² Amb., *De Off.*, I, 33, 172: “*Nam cum amicitia ex benevolentiae fonte procedat.*”

¹³ Cic., *De amic.*, VI, 20: “*Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum huma narumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio.*”

not just religious but sociopolitical. That is why, the resume of the ciceronian notion responded to the episcopal demand.

According to José Miguel Serrano Delgado (1999: 175), the fellowship is a diverse social phenomenon that clarifies several aspects of the private and public roman life. When Ambrose required from the clergymen the preservation of the fellowship based on the benevolence it exalted not just the feeling of kindness, but also, a practice that approximated people, created bonds, and provided the union of a community. The one that was benevolent, should inspire others to act accordingly. Thus, the bonds of fellowship expanded, since, according to the bishop, they were born from the benevolence, and expanded the religious family protected and guided by the author. At this fortuity, the fellowship urged by Ambrose was not just an individual and private issue, it was, on this account, a public matter, since a fellowship united the clergymen and formed a great group responsible by promulgating the Christian behaviors and teachings. Such group, that, on the other hand, accepted the Ambrosian words, corroborated the episcopal power and the validity of the Catholic Christian belief.

Ambrose insisted in the ciceronian discursive structure (*De amic.*, VI, 20) that linked fellowship to the benevolence and charity. The priest persuaded its audience to practice the common charity through the retribution of loving the one that showed this feeling: "Indeed, to stimulate the common charity, the most beneficial would be to return this love to the ones that loves us and demonstrate that you do not love less than we are loved, and to make it accessible as an example of loyal fellowship"¹⁴. This retribution of loved had been required by the classic orator with the same reappropriated verbs by Ambrose: *amare* (love) and *redamare* (return the love) (Cic., *De amic.*, XIV, 49).

Besides the obvious influence of the Ciceronian work, I observe in the context of Ambrose, the necessity to highlight that love generates bonds of reciprocity. In the ambrosian work, "charity" and "love" were reunited in the same paragraph of "loyal fellowship". In this case, I concur that the affirmation of Daniele Guastani (2009: 38, 41) that Christianity based its doctrine in love and fraternity, thus, while the followers of Greco-Roman beliefs loved only its equals, the perfect Christians also loved their enemies.

¹⁴ Amb., *De Off.*, II, 7, 37: "Etenim ad incentivum charitatis communis plurimum proficit, si quis vicem amantibus reddat, nec minus redamare se probet, quam ipse amatur, idque amicitiae fidelis pateat exemplis."

Principles linked to equity, to condescension and patronage conducted most of the old relations of fellowship, even, these, administrated by juridical documents. The equity was, also, one of the conditions of Ciceronian fellowship (*De amic.*, V, 19), alongside the faith, integrity, and generosity. It is certain that I cannot exclude the role of the affections involved on these relationships nor generalize all the fellowships to political-administrative interests. Affections are inherent to the human nature! However, I leave it to a future work a study of the feelings in the proposed history, in Brazil, in the edited book by Marion Brepohl, André Mendes Capraro and Renata Senna Garraffoni (2012). In the present article, I choose to comprehend the socio-political force that the ambrosian elaborations offered the Catholic Christianity and its followers.

Over this point of view, I disagree with Guastini when the author mentions that Christianity “started a new path for the concept of fellowship, partially without being related with the history of evolution and decay of the classic concept of *philia* until be reduced to a form of private relation” (2009: 38)¹⁵. As I examined over this article, the practical nature of Aristotelean *philia* and many of the bonds of Ciceronian *amicitia* were swarmed in the ambrosian text, however, it received characteristics seen as Christians to promote a favorable speech to a group lead by the bishop of Milan. And here I return to the quote of Thamin (1895: 443) as for “certain truths” that were rooted in the roman culture and that were Christianized. By requesting the reciprocity of fellowship and presenting this practice as a “faithful fellowship” (*Amb., De Off.*, II, 7, 37), Ambrose extended and strengthened the group of Christians for which he wrote/spoke. Such unity granted more space of acting to this group and to those who lead him. Therefore, I do not realize that the Christianity has reduced fellowship to a “private form of relationship”, as suggested by Guastini (2009: 38).

Still regarding the conquered unity by the bonds of fellowship, Ambrose pointed out that the idea that the Christians were part of a same organism. Notion explained in the *Atos dos Apóstolos* (4, 32) and one of the central points of the stoic ethic (Castillo, 2001: 308). To Cicero (*De Off.* I, 17, 56), the unity of everyone in a single organism would be reached through the virtues, making the individuals that possessed them were loved, even,

¹⁵ On this work, I do not examine my disagreement about the concepts “evolution” and “decay” presented by the author. I clarify, Only, that I base my studies on the concepts of “rework” and “transformation” and in methodologies that analyse the 4th Century A.D by bias the Late Antiquity. For further information about the subject, I suggest the reading of the works of Peter Brown (1972), Henri-Irenee Marrou (1979) and Renan Frighetto (2012).

being, easier to love those who shared the good mores, the same interests, and same tastes. In accords with the orator, this bondage resulted in the fellowship indicated by Pythagoras. Following the Ciceronian steps, Ambrose (*De Off.*, I, 33, 172) exalted the bonds of fellowship among those who were equals (“*pares nobis*”). However, the Milanese has especially selected two virtues considered, for him, supreme in the unity of all Christians in a single organism:

Violenta-se a natureza do gênero humano e a congregação da santa igreja, que cresce como um corpo conexo ligado pela unidade da fé e da caridade.¹⁶

Ele [o apóstolo Paulo] fala para aqueles que a caridade havia unido como um só corpo.¹⁷

While the Ciceronian speech emphasised the extent of the virtues to the composition of a unique organism beneficial to the interests of the *Res publica*, the Ambrosian elaborations highlighted the faith and charity as essential virtues to the formation of the organism that would form the servants of the Catholic Christian God.

The faith (*fides*) was an ancient roman virtue, symbol, of the reciprocal trust amongst the regents and its rulers. In the Imperial Age, a relation based on the faith commanded that everyone fulfil its role in benefit of the support of the Empire (Rodríguez Gervás, 1991: 80). In the daily culture, faith was related to the vow of the word, to a sworn taken. Therefore, it was used by Cicero, for example, in the extract: “Because what was said, it requires faith.”¹⁸

Now Ambrose and several ecclesiastical authors made from the faith the bond between the followers of God and its divinity. Thus, they transformed the traditional bond amongst human beings as a virtue that harness everyone to the Christian God, offering to this virtue a theological ethos. By pointing out the faith as one of the principles to the union of Christians in a single organism and to demand of its audience guided actions through faith, the Milanese has strengthened this element once again, making it not just constant in its speeches, but, also, exalting its practice.

Besides the faith, according to the bishop, charity was needed to the formation of a single organism of Christians. The notion of charity evoked

¹⁶ Amb., *De Off.*, III, 3, 19: “*Violatur natura generis humani, et sanctae ecclesiae congregatio, quae in unum connexus corporis atque compactum unitate fidei et charitatis assurgit.*”

¹⁷ Amb., *De Off.*, III, 22, 128: “*Dicit enim his quos ejusdem corporis complexa est charitas.*”

¹⁸ Cic., *De Off.*, I, 7, 23: “*Quia fiat quod dictum est, appellatam fidem.*”

the distribution of wealth, thus, the wealthiest members and the poorest of the Christian community shared the mobilization of these belongings (Brown, 1999: 48-49). In this case, I recover the idea of Guastani (2009: 38, 41) concerning the centrality of love and fraternity to a Christian doctrine. Through charity, a wealthy Christian demonstrated its services to God and the love to its religious brethren, while those, less rich, bonded to this action by being helped. Organizing this movement, were ecclesiastic leaders that, like Ambrose, elaborated and professed those speeches, exalted charitable initiatives, and administrated the community belongings.

The arguments selected by Ambrose to request from its clergymen and its followers the constitution of bonds of fellowship, conceived the association of all the Christians into a single organism making an extensive group, beyond the kinships and beyond the sociopolitical equities. In this fortuity, I observe that despite the similarities between the proposed fellowship by Cicero and Ambrose, quoted previously, the relation of fellowship craved by the Milanese extrapolated the ciceronian sociopolitical equity. However, when the bishop promoted the fellowship amongst its equals (Amb., *De Off.*, I, 33, 172: "*paris nobis*") these "equals" were not just part of the roman aristocracy and the public individuals that ordered the sociopolitical communities, along the lines of the Greek-Roman tradition. These individuals were also contemplated in the Ambrosian fellowship, and, amongst them, there were women and the members that were less wealthy from those communities, forming, thus, a single organism that served to the Christian Catholic God.

This expanded family, connected by bonds of fellowship, compressed on the idea of a larger number of Christians that formed a single organism, expanded both the sociopolitical participation of this group and the power of Ambrose, once that was him whom provided the organization of these people under your words and cares. I reinstate that the ambrosian speeches revealed unrests and desires of the author concerning the clergymen and Christians. Doubts and daily events drew this writing. At that time, the practice promoted the elaboration of theories about the fellowship and silence. Such theoretical arguments, on the other hand, exalted specific actions of the ambrosian audience that was stimulated to be silent and reflect before acting and to join its semblants on the faith.

Final Considerations

Although the ciceronian works and the stoic ethic had influenced the ambrosian reflection concerning the obligations of the Catholic cleric, the Milanese reworked the need of silence and the importance of the bonds of fellowship to respond to the needs of the Catholic Christian Religion professed by him. I observe that this operation, significative in the period of strengthening of this religion, occurred according to the discursive traditions already established in the Christian and Greek-Roman culture, integrating in the ambrosian arguments principles such as charity, benevolence and faith and examples of the Christian Literature.

On this path, the usage of the passages of the Scriptures and the devoted ideas of Cicero by part of the Milanese provided the bishop the necessary authority so that its work was well received and, simultaneously, facilitated the comprehension of the Ambrosian message by its audience, seen that these were notions already known.

By exalting the silence and fellowship, theory and practice, tradition and reformulation merged in the arguments of the bishop to complement and impose several behaviors, specially, those who should teach the principles of the Catholic faith. On one hand, the silence urged the reflection and guaranteed the safety of that person who thought before acting. On the other hand, the fellowship created conditions so that the Christians united and formed a great group that claimed the validity of its belief. In the center of all this, Ambrose guaranteed its role of educator and, thus, the leader of that community. That is why, I understand that such speech stimulated beneficial conducts for both the legitimacy of the Catholic religion and the strengthening of the power of the bishop himself.

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