

The Beginning of the Theology of Numbers: From Philo of Alexandria to Saint Victorinus of Poetovio

Początki teologii liczb: od Filona z Aleksandrii do św. Wiktoryna z Petowium

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Abstract: In the Ante-Nicene period of the Church of Christ's history, most holy fathers, church writers, and other authors devoted particular attention to the theology of numbers, or symbolic arrhythmology. They "borrowed" their numbers from Holy Scripture and several other sources. Therefore, in this study, we have limited ourselves to those writers for whom the symbolic numbers "one," "seven," and "eight" are particularly significant. Firstly, it is Philo of Alexandria, who, while revealing the symbolic significance of the numbers "one" and "seven," mentioned the number "eight" as a historical number. Secondly, there are Hermas, Anonymous, and Saint Cyprian of Carthage, who, paying attention only to the symbolic numbers "one" and "seven," teach that the number "one" is equal to the number "seven." And thirdly, it is Saint Victorinus of Poetovio, who, revealing the symbolic meaning of the numbers "one," "seven" and "eight," comes to the conclusion that the number "one" is equal to the number "seven," and also that the number "eight" is a "continuation" of the number "one." It should also be taken into account that, with the help of these numbers, Philo of Alexandria, Hermas, Anonymous, Saint Cyprian of Carthage and Saint Victorinus of Poetovio, while revealing "the laws of the Universe" (using the terminology of Professor Martine Dulaey), emphasize those issues that concern them most and examine a wide variety of topics.

Keywords: theology of numbers, symbolic arrhythmology, Holy Scripture, Ante-Nicene writers, the number „one”, the number „seven”, the number „eight”, Philo of Alexandria, Hermas, Anonymous, Saint Cyprian of Carthage, Saint Victorinus of Poetovio, allegorical interpretation, typological interpretation, theological and philological analysis, six-day creation of the world.

Streszczenie: W przedniecejskim okresie dziejów Kościoła Chrystusowego większość świętych ojców, pisarzy kościelnych i innych autorów poświęcała szczególną uwagę teologii liczb, czyli symbolicznej arytmologii. Swoje liczby „zapożyczyli” oni z Pisma Świętego oraz z kilku innych źródeł. Dlatego też w niniejszym studium ograniczyliśmy się do tych pisarzy, dla których szczególnie znaczące są liczby symboliczne „jeden”, „siedem” i „osiem”. Po pierwsze, jest to Filon z Aleksandrii, który — odsłaniając symboliczne znaczenie liczb „jeden” i „siedem” — wzman-

kował o liczbie „osiem” jako liczbie historycznej. Po drugie, są to Hermas, Anonim oraz św. Cyprian z Kartaginy, którzy, zwracając uwagę wyłącznie na liczby symboliczne „jeden” i „siedem”, nauczają, że liczba „jeden” jest równa liczbie „siedem”. Po trzecie zaś, jest to św. Wiktor z Petowium, który — ukazując symboliczne znaczenie liczb „jeden”, „siedem” i „osiem” — dochodzi do wniosku, że liczba „jeden” jest równa liczbie „siedem”, a ponadto że liczba „osiem” stanowi „kontynuację” liczby „jeden”. Należy także wziąć pod uwagę, że za pomocą tych liczb Filon z Aleksandrii, Hermas, Anonim, św. Cyprian z Kartaginy oraz św. Wiktor z Petowium — odsłaniając „prawa Wszechświata” (posługując się terminologią profesor Martine Dulaey) — podkreślają te zagadnienia, które najbardziej ich zajmują, oraz badają najrozmaitsze tematy.

Słowa kluczowe: teologia liczb, arytmologia symboliczna, Pismo Święte, pisarze przedniejszy, liczba „jeden”, liczba „siedem”, liczba „osiem”, Filon z Aleksandrii, Hermas, Anonim, św. Cyprian z Kartaginy, św. Wiktor z Petawii, interpretacja alegoryczna, interpretacja typologiczna, analiza teologiczna i filologiczna, sześciodniowe stworzenie świata.

*Dedicated to the jubilee of Professor Martine Dulaey,
a leading French expert on Latin patristics*

Introduction

In the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which, as is known, are written in symbolic and figurative language (Nikulin, 2022, s. 62; Skaballanovich, 1911, s. 535-536), various numbers (Wisdom 11:21; John 11:9) are found on practically every page. All these numbers, which “are among the oldest and most important symbols in antiquity” (Kalvesmaki, 2006, s. 1), are divided by modern exegetes into two categories: historical and symbolic (Ivliev, 2015, s. 90; Men’, 2002, s. 400)¹. Based on the name, it follows that the first category includes numbers reflecting historical reality, that is, those that have a material component; the second category includes numbers reflecting symbolic reality, that is, those imbued with deep theological meaning. However, “since the Bible primarily contains the kerygma, the Word of God, the numerical data of the second category predominate” (Men’, 2002, s. 400). In addition, one should not forget that this category includes natural numbers, that is, from one to “infinity.”

Also, symbolic numbers, “which are expressions of the laws of the Universe” (Dulaey, 1993a, s. 119), significantly complement the text of the biblical narrative. For example, the number “one,” according to the original Divine plan, is “connected” with free will and, accordingly, with the ability to do good or evil (Luke 15:3-10; Matthew 18:12-14). This number is especially important for the one Lord Almighty (Ephesians 4:5-6; see also: Malachi 2:10; Mark 12:29), Who in the beginning created only one world, or “heaven and earth” and one man (Genesis 1:1; 2:1; 1:26-27; 2:7; Acts 17:24-26), and in the end will create “a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth have passed

¹ There is another opinion, that is, that the numbers found on the pages of Holy Scripture come in four categories: generally accepted, rhetorical, symbolic and hidden (Slovar’, 2005, s. 1312).

away” (Revelation 21:1; see also: Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13). Nevertheless, the number “darkness,” or “without number,” that is, “infinity,” has a completely different meaning. This number is known only to God and is “located” in His power (Deuteronomy 33:2; Jude 1:14; Psalm 103:25; 104:34-35). Consequently, the number “one” and the number “darkness,” or “without number,” have different symbolic meanings, the significance of which cannot be fully understood. However, if we remember that in the world, besides angels, people and animals, there exists the Trinity of One Essence and Indivisible (Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7), then the spiritual life of every person (Acts 17:28), and especially of every repentant sinner (Luke 15:7,10; Matthew 18:14), becomes especially important. Therefore, textbooks on biblical and patristic theology should include another section – the theology of numbers, or symbolic arrhythmology².

In this study, we will limit ourselves to more modest objectives, determined by the number of authors, works, and numbers “borrowed” from Holy Scripture and certain other sources (naturally, sometimes this is “literal borrowing,” and sometimes “authorial interpretation”). Nevertheless, preference will be given to biblical examples, as they convey the words of God Himself through the sacred authors. Based on this, using theological and philological analysis, firstly, we will analyze and compare some fragments from the works of such Ante-Nicene writers (1st – early 4th century) as Philo of Alexandria, Hermas, Anonymous, Saints Cyprian of Carthage and Victorinus of Poetovio. Secondly, from the numbers, we will select only symbolic, or perfect, numbers: “one,” “seven,” and “eight.” And thirdly, let us find out whether it is possible that the number “one” is equal to the number “seven” and how the number “eight” relates to them?

1. Alexandria: Philo of Alexandria

The first time we encounter the theology of numbers is in the works of Philo of Alexandria (about 30 BC – 45 AD), a contemporary of the Lord Jesus Christ (5 or 6 BC – 30 or 33 AD) and the chief apostles Peter and Paul (about 67/68), who in a way “is a mediator between Greek philosophy and early Judaism, on the one hand, and Christian theology, on the other” (Gaginskij, 2012, s. 27). In other words, “Philo was an exegete of the Jewish Scriptures, a philosopher, and a contemplative “mystic” (Shenk, 2007, s. 18). The formation of his worldview was influenced by various philosophers and, accordingly, by various philosophical schools. First of all, it is Pythagoras (about 570 BC – 490 BC). This is written about, for example, by Clement of Alexandria (about 150 – about 215), who calls him a “Pythagorean” (Clément, 1951, s. 102; Clément, 1954, s. 111). Secondly, it is Plato (428/427, or 424/423 BC – 348/347 BC). This is written about, for example, by Blessed Jerome of Stridon (about 347 – 419/420), who calls him “the second, or Jewish Plato” (Hieronymus, 1910, s. 704) and “a follower of the Platonic school” (Hieronymus,

2 In modern studies, this term is used, since they consider only those numbers that reflect symbolic reality (Marin, 2021, s. 157-158; Marin, 2004, s. 195-196).

1910, s. 200). Moreover, as Jerome notes, “the Greeks have a proverb: ‘Either Plato Philonizes, or Philo Platonizes,’ that is, either Plato followed Philo, or Philo followed Plato, so great is the similarity of their thought and style” (Hieronymus, 2009, s. 298). Therefore, a natural question arises: the teachings of which of these philosophers predominate in the works of Philo?

A partial answer to this question is found in a work by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (between 260 and 270 – 339/340), who believes that “he (that is, Philo of Alexandria. – Author) studied Pythagoras and Plato with particular diligence” (Eusèbe, 1986, s. 56). Nevertheless, it is well known that the Pythagorean doctrine is older than the Platonic, but much smaller in scope. Accordingly, the “former” was a source of philosophical ideas for the “second”, but the influence of the idea of the “second” on later writers is difficult to underestimate. Based on this, a complete answer to this question follows: “However, Philo’s Platonism is predominantly Pythagorean in color. Numerology and the concept of parable are of great importance to him (Pythagoras often clothed his teachings in parables). These are Philo’s recurring themes, and without the Pythagorean doctrine there would be nowhere to borrow the philosophical content for them” (Savrej, 2006, s. 208). Moreover, “Philo’s Pythagorean features are manifested at two levels of his allegory – both in the ethical and in the physical interpretation, the very complexity of the structure of which already sets him apart from Stoic models” (Matusova, 2000, s. 24). Consequently, Philo in his works, that is, systematic commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, beginning with Genesis and ending with Deuteronomy (with additions from the Psalms and Prophets), rethought the philosophical ideas of Pythagoras and Plato, combining them with biblical teachings, set out, for example, in the Six Days, or Hexameron of the Prophet Moses the God-seer (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3).

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that “unlike other Middle Platonists, Philo was a monotheistic Jew, not just a philosopher but also a careful exegete of the Bible” (Zinkovskij, 2014, s. 47). Therefore, in his writings, depending on the passages of Scripture that he considered literal or “higher,” he used different methods of interpretation. Accordingly, if the text was literal, Philo chose a historical, or literal, interpretation, while if it was a “higher” text, he resorted to a mystical, or allegorical, interpretation (Panagopulos, 2013, s. 82-88). When interpreting the numbers associated with the “higher” passages of the Pentateuch, which are partly the subject of his treatises “On the Creation of the World” and “Allegory of the Laws”, he employed symbolic interpretation, which is an integral part of allegorical interpretation (Savrej, 2006, s. 295). This is how he writes about it: “All this, it seems to me, should be interpreted rather in a symbolic than in a literal sense” (Philo, 1896a, s. 53; see also: Philo, 1896b, s. 61, 66). Also, “according to this method, the letter of the Law is a cipher or veil behind which some spiritual or moral idea is hidden” (Panagopulos, 2013, s. 84). Thus, Philo uses allegorical interpretation in his works solely for the purpose of teaching moral lessons to his contemporaries and their successors.

In addition, Philo of Alexandria “remains alone among the authors of his time (at least non-Christian ones) who has a truly mystical teaching, based, at least in part, on

genuine experience” (Armstrong, 2006, s. 181). Therefore, when analyzing his teaching on numbers, one must remember that Philo is the least consistent in this matter, that is, he is more a mystic than a philosopher or exegete. In other words, “it is hardly possible to indicate precisely the ‘rules’ that Philo follows in this case. Sometimes he proceeds from the mathematical properties of number, sometimes from its connection with known world phenomena, sometimes from the peculiarities of the biblical text to be interpreted; often, finally, he combines all the ‘rules’ together, and then an irreconcilable contradiction arises, since the same number acquires different symbolic meanings” (Ivanickij, 1911, s. 536-537). It should be borne in mind, however, that “Philo seems to have had great respect for the principles of Pythagoras and to have adduced sound mathematical proofs alongside the biblical ones” (Rogers, 2025, s. 173). For him, for example, the numbers “one” and “seven” are symbolic numbers, since the number “one” is God, the Monad, the Divine Logos, the intelligible world, the visible world, the first man, the divine garden, and also the first day of creation; the number “seven” is all possible variants in both the corporeal and incorporeal worlds, the number of days, as well as the seventh day of rest. However, the number “eight” is not such a number, since, firstly, “eight (ὀκτώ) is a number derived from four taken twice, but does not itself produce any number in the decimal” (Philo, 1896a, s. 34). And, secondly, “the embryos in the womb reach maturity in seven months (μῆσιν ἑπτὰ), so that something quite surprising happens: those of seven months (ἑπτάμηνα) are viable, while those of eight months (ὀκτωμηνιαίων), as a rule, cannot survive» (Philo, 1896a, s. 43; see also: Philo, 1896b, s. 63). Therefore, according to Philo, only some numbers have a symbolic meaning (for example, the numbers “one” and “seven”), that is, those that have a mathematical-biblical basis.

First of all, it is the number “one”, since “the fundamental tenet of Philo of Alexandria’s metaphysical system is the religiously sublime and at the same time philosophically refined doctrine of the one, absolute and personal God, Who is by His essence transcendental to the world, but at the same time is its Creator (πηγῆς, δημιουργός) and First Cause (αἴτιον, αἴτιος). [...] God is completely in need of nothing; neither before the origin of the world was there anything next to God, nor after its origin is there anything comparable to Him. This is an absolute being, a beginningless, self-sufficient principle, having within Himself the reason for His existence” (Fokin, 2017, s. 105-106). In this regard, his reflection on the first day of creation, corresponding to the first phase of creation, that is, the creation of the Idea, is interesting³. Following Moses (Genesis 1:3-5), Philo considers this day special, since it was then that God created immaterial and incorporeal light (Philo, 1896a, s. 9). Moreover, from the first day of creation the counting of time began and the question of its naming was resolved: “When the light appeared, and the darkness gave way and evening and morning were established as the boundaries in the intervals between

3 It should be noted that, according to Philo of Alexandria, there are three phases of creation during which God created the visible world: the creation of the Idea (phase one), the creation of the physical universal (phase two), and the creation of the physical particular (phase three). He most likely developed this scheme, which does not violate the structure of the creation narrative in Genesis, for apologetic reasons (Radice, 2009, s. 132-133).

them, then of necessity [it must be recognized that] there immediately arose a measure of time, which the Creator called day, and not the first day, but the ‘one’ (οὐχὶ πρώτην, ἀλλὰ μίαν), called [so] in view of the uniqueness of the intelligible world, which has the nature of a unity” (Philo, 1896a, s. 11; see also: Philo, 1896a, s. 4). This light also “became a model for the sun and all the luminous heavenly bodies which God created in heaven” (Philo, 1896a, s. 9). Naturally, firstly, this points to its Creator, Who is also immaterial and incorporeal; and, secondly, it suggests the idea that people, as “bearers” of the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27), must become like the Lord as their Prototype, that is, strive for true holiness (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

In expounding the doctrine of God, Philo of Alexandria, following the Pythagoreans and Platonists, calls Him one and one, or the Monad, that is, God is one, true, and there are no other gods (Philo, 1896a, s. 59-60; Philo, 1896b, s. 73, 90); He is the foundation and prototype of the Monad (Philo, 1896b, s. 90). Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that although God is represented “in the image of the one (μονὰς) and one (μονάδα), it is better to say that the one (μονάδα) is in the image of the one God (μονὰς ο Θεός), for every number is younger than the world, as is time, but God is older than the world and its Creator” (Philo, 1896b, s. 90). Therefore, “according to Philo, the biblical God is the absolute Monad, rising above all plurality, or even the Supermonad, for He is such a Unity next to which there are no other units, and such a Unity that is completely indivisible and indissoluble” (Majorov, 1979, s. 48-49). Thus, by analogy with the one God, there is only one Logos, or one Divine Logos, or one Divine Mind (Philo, 1896a, s. 7, 9, 11; Philo, 1896b, s. 107, 151)⁴; only one intelligible world, or one intelligible city (Philo, 1896a, s. 5-7); only one [visible] world, or one [visible] Universe, or one great city (Philo, 1896a, s. 60, 6), which the Creator created simultaneously, or instantly (Philo, 1896a, s. 4, 8-9, 22; Philo, 1896b, s. 61-62, 66), and not in six earthly days (Genesis 1:1-2:1); only one first man, or the first man born from the earth (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7), or the only citizen of the world – Adam (Genesis 2:20; Philo, 1896a, s. 47-50, 54), who was also created by the Creator⁵ and who, before God created his “helper” – Eve (Genesis 2:21-22) – lived alone in the garden, or in the divine garden, or in paradise like the first king (Philo, 1896a, s. 53; Philo, 1896b, s. 84, 90; Wyrzykowski, 2023, s. 99-105)⁶.

4 It's important to note that for Philo of Alexandria, the Logos is a personal being, or a second God, who not only participated in the creation of the world but also provides for it. However, unlike God, who is neither begotten nor created, the Logos is something between the unbegotten God and the created world. Furthermore, the Logos is the Mind of God, or the receptacle of His Divine ideas (Fokin, 2017, s. 116-117).

5 It should be borne in mind that, according to the teaching of Philo of Alexandria, which contradicts Holy Scripture (Genesis 1:20-25), God created the entire animal world on the fifth day of creation: «...He began to create the mortal race of living creatures and began on the fifth day with the creation of waterfowl, considering that nothing is so closely related to one another as the fivefold number for animals» (Philo, 1896a, s. 20). Accordingly, the Lord dedicated the sixth day of creation entirely to the creation of the primordial man (Genesis 1:26-31). It is most likely that Victorinus of Poetovio, after reading the treatise «On the Creation of the World» (De opificio mundi) by Philo of Alexandria, wrote the treatise «On the Creation of the World» (De fabrica mundi) (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296, 298), in which he began to adhere to a similar opinion. Naturally, both writers wanted to emphasize the special importance of Adam, and by extension, of all humanity, for the Creator.

6 It is important to note that, according to the teachings of Philo of Alexandria, the essential difference between created man and the created world is that man is the image of the one God, and the world is the image of the Divine Logos (Seleznev, 2023, s. 20-21).

This number is also “seven” because it expresses “the fullness of God’s glory” (Bajborodin, 2021, s. 77), numerous examples of which are presented in the treatises of Philo of Alexandria – “On the Creation of the World” from chapters 89 to 128 (Philo, 1896a, s. 31-44; this is about 22% of this work) and “Allegory of the Laws” from chapters 2 to 8 of Book I (Philo, 1896b, s. 61-66; this is about 4.5% of this work). This is how he writes about it: “I do not know whether anyone can be found who could adequately sing the nature of the week (ἑβδομάδος), since it surpasses all words” (Philo, 1896a, s. 31). In other words, “Philo dedicates more space to the number seven than to any other number” (Rogers, 2025, s. 173). This is most likely due to Philo’s origins and preferences, that is, he was a Jew who lived at the turn of the eras, and in symbolic arrhythmology he adhered to the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato. Therefore, for him, the number “seven” is sacred and symbolizes completeness, fullness, and holiness. However, it should be noted that he borrows these examples not from Holy Scripture, but from the works of ancient Greek philosophers and the surrounding reality (Kraft, 2009, s. 220-230). Furthermore, “Philo is downright enamored with Pythagorean-Platonic number theories and therefore finds these numbers in various essential and nonessential areas of human life” (Losev, 2000, s. 137). Naturally, this is a strict but fair critique of Philo’s theology of the number “seven.” Consequently, we will not consider these examples, as they fall outside the scope of our study.

For this reason, Philo of Alexandria attaches particular importance to the seventh day of rest, or Saturday: “When the whole world had been created according to the nature of sextuple, the perfect number, the Father glorified the seventh day (ἡμέραν ἑβδόμην) that had come, praising it and calling it holy. For not in any one city or country, but everywhere, is this day a feast, which alone in the full sense of the word is worthy of being called common to all men and the birthday of the world” (Philo, 1896a, s. 31; see also: Philo, 1896b, s. 62, 65). Thus, in the first six days God created the visible world, or the Universe (Genesis 1:1-2:1; the so-called six-day creation of the world), and on the seventh day He ceased to create (Genesis 2:2-3), but did not cease to care for all that was created. In other words, “the world is continually preserved thanks to the eternal activity of the Creator. The Creator brings rationality and order into the world and thereby makes it resistant to the passage of time” (Tolstenko, 2011, s. 138). Furthermore, on this day, Jews celebrate the birthday of the world and call it a holy, public, and universal holiday. Therefore, “the symbolism of the number seven is essential for understanding the meaning of the Sabbath in Philo. The long and detailed discussion in *De opificio mundi* 89-128 shows that the seal of the sevenfold scheme is imprinted on the cosmos, both corporeal and incorporeal, at all levels. The number seven indicates a value prior to creation, due to the connection that exists between the hebdomad and the monad” (Termini, 2009, s. 118). Consequently, according to the teaching of Philo of Alexandria, the “connecting link” between the seven (or hebdomad) and the unit (or monad), as well as the seventh day of rest and the first day of creation, is the one God, who, with the help of the one Logos, creates simultaneously, or instantly, the one visible world and, in particular, the first man Adam (Philo, 1896a, s. 47-50, 54) as “the most beautiful of earthly and destructible [entities]” (Philo, 1896a, s. 28),

from whom the entire human race originated, and also provides for them (Philo, 1896a, s. 3, 60; Philo, 1896b, s. 65; Benevich, 2013, s. 40-41).

2. Rome: Hermas and Anonymous

The next writer in time who pays special attention to the symbolic meaning of the numbers “one” and “seven” is Hermas (first half of the 2nd century) – a Jew by origin, and also a Greek-speaking Christian seer, prophet and author of the treatise “The Shepherd”, who wrote it in Rome around 140-150 (Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 80; Sidorov, 2011, s. 161)⁷. As for the title of the work, it most likely derives from the main character of this treatise, that is, from the angel of repentance, who, appearing to Hermas in the guise of a shepherd, imparted various revelations. As some researchers rightly believe, “this work, in its character and style, is one of the most complex among the works of the apostolic fathers” (Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 80; Sidorov, 2011, s. 159; see also: Sagarda, 2004, s. 160; Sagarda, Sagarda, 2004, s. 235). The whole point is that, on the one hand, the treatise “The Shepherd” is written “in the genre of ‘apocalypses’, that is, direct revelations from above; it even has a fascinating, almost artistic, plot line and numerous dialogues, mystical images, dreams, and visions” (Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 80). On the other hand, the author in this work only “uses the form of an apocalypse to shape the content, which can be defined rather as an allegorical (though not always) sermon on virtues and repentance” (Vinogradov, Dunaev, 2008, s. 614). Therefore, when resorting to a theological and philological analysis of the treatise “Shepherd”, one should keep in mind its various features, including the religious worldview of Hermas, which is often unconventional.

For Hermas, the main teachings are ecclesiology and morality. According to his teachings, the Church has two incompatible aspects, that is, the metaphysical-transcendental (heavenly or ideal) and the eschatological (earthly or imperfect) (Hermas, 2014, s. 44, 47; Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 82-83; Carolyn, 1999, s. 36-37). The first aspect indicates that the Church-Elder was created by God before all living beings and the world came into being for her sake (the so-called doctrine of the pre-existent Church, which is also found in the Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (middle of the 2nd century) (Anonymus, 2007, s. 154-155)). That is, most likely, the Eldress Church existed from the creation of the world until the First Coming of Christ, or during the Old Testament period. The second aspect indicates that the Tower Church will gradually evolve (from a simpler to a more complex version), so its historical path, which began on earth, will only end in the Kingdom of Heaven. That is, most likely, the Tower Church will exist from the First Coming of Christ until the Second Coming of Christ, or during the New Testament period. Based on this, according to the teaching of Hermas, there are two Churches: the Old

⁷ There is another opinion, that is, that Hermas wrote The Shepherd in the first half of the 2nd century (Batovici, 2021, s. 302; Tornau, Cecconi, 2014, s. 1).

Testament Church, or Eldress Church (which has ceased to exist), and the New Testament Church, or the Church of Christ, or Tower Church (Matthew 16:18; which still exists) (Pisarev, 2009, s. 404-405). Consequently, in the treatise “The Shepherd” the doctrine of numbers is revealed in the context of Old Testament ecclesiology and New Testament ecclesiology and morality.

For Hermas, as for Philo of Alexandria, the number “one” is associated with the one God, or God the Father, who in this work is also called the Lord, the Creator, and the Father, who created and provides for the world. Hermas, explaining the first commandment, teaches: “Believe first of all that there is one God (*unus Deus*), who created and perfected all things (Ephesians 3:9), who brought all things from non-existence into existence (2 Maccabees 7:28; Hebrews 11:3). He embraces all things, being Himself immeasurable, and cannot be defined by words or comprehended by the mind” (Hermas, 2014, s. 58; see also: Hermas, 2014, s. 85). Therefore, as N. I. Sagarda rightly believes, “the first commandment represents the formulation of the central truth of [Hermas’s] theology and can be accepted as the foundation of all subsequent teaching...” (Sagarda, 2004, s. 164; Sagarda, Sagarda, 2004, s. 242). However, unlike Philo, he maintains that there is also one Son of God, who in this creation is also called the majestic man, the majestic and glorious man, and the Holy Spirit⁸. This is how Hermas writes about this: “The Son of God (*Filius dei*) is more ancient than every creature, so that he was present at the council of his Father (*patri suo*) regarding the creation of the creature” (Hermas, 2014, s. 111; see also: Hermas, 2014, s. 83-84). There is also one prophet in the one God, that is, Hermas (Hermas, 2014, s. 45, 51, 54, 56, 86, 109), who has with him one handsome youth, or shepherd, that is, the angel of repentance (Hermas, 2014, s. 44, 57, 74-75, 101, 125-126)⁹. It is important to keep in mind that Hermas, before receiving one of God’s revelations, “fasted one day (*unum diem*)” in honor of the one God (Hermas, 2014, s. 53; see also: Hermas, 2014, s. 80). Thus, according to the teaching of Hermas (although he does not say this directly), the world was created by God the Father and the Son of God and, accordingly, the Divine duality cares for order and harmony in the world.

By analogy with the one God the Father and the one Son of God, there exists in the world, firstly, one Church-Tower, which was made, or hewn from one stone: “And when he (that is, the shepherd. – Author) saw that it was beautiful in its construction, he became very happy; for it was built so well that anyone who saw it would admire its construction, because it seemed to be made as if from one stone (*de uno lapide*), and not a single joint was visible, but was hewn from this stone” (Hermas, 2014, s. 108; see also: Hermas, 2014, s. 46, 112, 116). Secondly, after the sacrament of Baptism, Christians have only one

8 It should be noted that the phrases «The Son is the Holy Spirit» (Hermas, 2014, s. 83); «For this Spirit is the Son of God» (Hermas, 2014, s. 101), which mention the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity, are ambiguous. First, Hermas unites the Son and the Holy Spirit into one inseparable whole. Second, he, with the help of the Holy Spirit, testifies to the divinity of the Son (Sidorov, 2011, s. 164-165).

9 Moreover, there is a single enemy of God and people at work in the world – the devil, who in the last times will send a false prophet to earth with the sole purpose of «attracting [to his side] one of the righteous,» that is, «those who are double-minded, and not true believers» (Hermas, 2014, s. 70-72; see also: Hermas, 2014, s. 54-57).

repentance¹⁰: “Therefore, I (that is, the shepherd. – Author) say to you (that is, Hermas. – Author), that after this great and holy calling (that is, the sacrament of Baptism. – Author), if anyone, having been tempted by the devil and has sinned, has only one repentance (unam paenitentiam). But if he often sins and performs repentance, this will not serve to the benefit of the person who does this, for he will live in God with difficulty” (Hermas, 2014, s. 61; see also: Hermas, 2014, s. 60). However, since this is practically impossible to do, all kinds of sins in the Shepherd are considered in terms of pleasure and punishment: “One hour of pleasure and enjoyment (dulcedinis et voluptatis una hora) is limited in duration, but one hour of punishment (poenae vero una hora) has the strength of thirty days. He who has given himself over to pleasure and enjoyment for one hour [in this life] will suffer torment for one day [in the future life], but one day of torment will be worth a whole year. Therefore, for as many days as one enjoys, so many years will one suffer torment” (Hermas, 2014, s. 89). Based on this, Hermas, warning Christians about spiritual responsibility, “theoretically supported the unconditional holiness of Church members, and consequently, the unconditional self-sufficiency of the grace of baptism alone, as a means of remission of ‘all previous sins,’ but in practice he also allowed for repeated repentance as a concession to human weakness, as a manifestation of God’s special mercy toward the state of the Christian seeking salvation in his struggle “with the great malice of the devil” (Pisarev, 2009, s. 435). Thus, Hermas, calling Christians to holiness of life, teaches that they should, if possible, avoid grave sins and repent of all sins in the one Church of Christ.

For Hermas, the number “seven” is also associated with the number “one.”¹¹ Using the typological method of interpreting Holy Scripture and an allusion to the Book of Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 4:1), he tells of seven women standing around one Church-Tower: “Do you see the seven women around the tower?” “I see them, lady (that is, the old woman. – Author),” I (that is, Hermas. – Author) say. “This tower [,” she says, “] is supported by them by the Lord’s command. Listen now to their actions. The first of them, who holds it with her hands, is called faith (fides); through her, God’s chosen ones are saved. The other, who is girded and acts courageously, is called continence (continentia); she is the daughter of faith (fidei). And whoever follows her will be blessed in his life, for he will abstain from all evil deeds, believing that he will be an heir of eternal life if he abstains from every evil desire.” “Who are the other five, lady?” [I say]. “Daughters one after another,” she says, “but one is called simplicity (simplicitas), another innocence (innocentia), the third modesty (modestia), the fourth strict order (disciplina), the fifth mercy (caritas). Therefore, when you fulfill the works of their mother, then you will be able to keep all things”

10 It is important to note that for Hermas, who most likely wrote The Shepherd in several stages, there are two practices of repentance. The first, or rigoristic (Hermas, 2014, s. 61), is where Christians after the sacrament of Baptism have only one repentance. And the second, or non-rigoristic (Hermas, 2014, s. 118-119) – Christians after the sacrament of Baptism can repent many times (Peshkov, 2025, s. 40-41).

11 Once, contradicting a shepherd, he said: «They (that is, sinners. – Author) suffer little, I (that is, Hermas. – Author) say, «those who have given themselves over to pleasures and forgotten God should suffer punishments seven times greater» (Hermas, 2014, s. 88). That is, Hermas, incorrectly thinking, believed that those who in earthly life abandoned faith in the one God and, accordingly, did not repent of their sins, receive a sevenfold punishment after death.

(Hermas, 2014, s. 50-51; see also: Hermas, 2014, s. 113). Consequently, according to the teaching of Hermas, true Christians are only those who, during their earthly life, believe in one God the Father, one Son of God, and are members of the one Church of Christ, and also acquire the seven virtues necessary for inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven.

The next writer who pays special attention to the symbolic meaning of the numbers “one” and “seven” is Anonymous (second half of the 2nd century), a Greek-speaking Christian writer and the author of the work “The Muratorian Fragment,” or “Muratorian Canon,” who wrote it in Rome around 200 (Schnabel, 2014, s. 239; Naumowicz, 2011, s. 11-12)¹². As for the title of the work, it is associated with its discoverer, that is, L. A. Muratori (1672-1750) – a Catholic priest, historian of the Church of Christ, religious thinker and learned encyclopedist, who in 1700 in the Ambrosian Library discovered an anonymous fragment of a Latin manuscript from the 8th century and first published it in 1740. However, “The Muratorian Fragment” is not a canon in the proper sense of the word (as some researchers claim, for example, Karnachev, 2017, s. 673; Tkachenko, 2017, s. 675-679; Tkachenko, 2012, s. 253; Naumowicz, 2011, s. 11-12 and others), since it “is not only a list of canonical books; its author sets out their main theological ideas, and also cites the circumstances of the writing of some of them, known to him. Therefore, this work can be considered the first of the known introductions to the New Testament” (Jurevich, 2016, s. 75; Mecer, 2011, s. 191). Moreover, “perhaps it should be classified as a biblical prologue” (Tkachenko, 2017, s. 675). Therefore, when resorting to a theological-philological analysis of the “Muratarian Fragment,” one should keep in mind that this work is an anonymous fragment and an introduction to the New Testament, which combines different information.

For Anonymus, the number “one” is, firstly, associated with the one Lord Jesus Christ, who, called the Spirit, is the true author of the Four Gospels, since “by one Spirit (uno spiritu) everything was revealed in all [the Gospels]: concerning the birth, the passion, the resurrection, the life with the disciples, his two comings; the first in humiliation, when he endured suffering, the second in glory, in the royal dignity that will take place in the future” (Anonymus, 2008, s. 33). Moreover, this opinion is confirmed by the Apostle Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: “The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17; see also: Luke 4:18-19). Secondly, with a single authoritative book that partially reveals the apostolic life – “The Acts of the Holy Apostles.” However, it must be kept in mind that not all the apostles saw “the Lord in the flesh” (Anonymus, 2008, s. 33). For example, the apostle and evangelist Luke neither saw nor heard the Savior of the world. Nevertheless, He is the true teacher of the twelve and seventy apostles, since “the acts of all the apostles are written in one book (uno libro)”

12 It is important to note that there is no unanimous opinion among scholars as to who could have been its author, either among Greek-speaking or Latin-speaking Christian writers. However, in 2008, an article appeared in a scholarly journal in which J. J. Armstrong attempted to prove that Victorinus of Poetovio was the author of «The Muratorian Fragment» (Armstrong, 2008, s. 1-34). Unfortunately, his attempt was unsuccessful, since a short time later this opinion was convincingly refuted by other scientists (Tkachenko, 2012, s. 253; Guignard, 2015, s. 599-601; Tkachenko, 2017, p. 676; Rothschild, 2018, s. 58-59, footnote 8; Rothschild, 2022, s. 150-157).

(Anonymus, 2008, s. 33). And thirdly, with a single apostle “in need of protection” – the chief apostle Paul, who also did not see, but heard, the Lord (Acts 9:3-8). Unlike the other apostles mentioned in this work only by name, he is referred to as “the blessed apostle Paul (beatus apostolus Paulus)” (Anonymus, 2008, s. 33). This is most likely due to the fact that Anonymus, knowing personally the heretic Marcion (2nd century), who had a negative attitude toward the apostle Paul and his epistolary legacy, wanted to emphasize the true significance of the apostle Paul for the Church of Christ (Pani, 1999, s. 189).

By analogy with the one Lord, there is only one Church in the world, or one Universal Church (Anonymus, 2008, s. 33-34), the head of which is the Lord Jesus Christ, for “their foundation is Christ (Christum)” (Anonymus, 2008, s. 33). Based on this, Anonymus, combining the number “one” with the number “seven”, indicates that the one Church consists of seven churches of Christ – Corinthian, Ephesian, Philippian, Colossian, Galatian, Thessalonian and Roman (Anonymus, 2008, s. 33) – arranged “in chronological order and increasing volume” (Tkachenko, 2017, s. 678). In listing these churches, he refers to the Apostle Paul, who, in imitation of the Apostle John, wrote seven epistles (Dulaey, 1993a, s. 305): “We need to discuss them (that is, the epistles. – Author) one by one, since the blessed apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor John, addresses only seven churches (septem ecclesiis) by name in the following order: first to the Corinthians, second to the Ephesians, third to the Philipians, fourth to the Colossians, fifth to the Galatians, sixth to the Thessalonians, seventh to the Romans. It is true that he wrote again to the Corinthians and Thessalonians for exhortation, but nevertheless it is clearly seen that there is one Church (una ecclesia), scattered throughout the whole earth. “For John, even in the Apocalypse, although he writes to seven churches (septem ecclesiis), nevertheless addresses them all” (Anonymus, 2008, s. 33). Therefore, for Anonymus, “the number ‘seven’ symbolizes the fullness of the one Church (although the author of ‘The Muratorian Canon’ further mentions 2 Corinthians and 2 Thessalonians)” (Tkachenko, 2017, s. 678; Mecger, 2011, s. 198). Moreover, discussing the “Apocalypse of Peter” and “The Shepherd” of Hermas, he asserts that these works are useful for Christians to read at home, but they “cannot be read to people publicly in church (that is, in none of the seven churches of Christ. – Author)” (Anonymus, 2008, s. 34). Therefore, according to the teaching of Anonymous, although there are many churches in the world, only one Universal Church, or one Church of Christ, is true, in which a special place is given to the one head – the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as to his disciple – the blessed Apostle Paul.

3. Carthage: Saint Cyprian of Carthage

Further, we encounter the theology of numbers in the pages of the works of Saint Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200/210 – 258) – the first Latin holy father, a true supporter of the unity of the Universal Church, the first martyr of the Carthaginian Church (Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 242-247; Fokin, 2013, s. 658-661; Ziegler, 2009, s. 458-471; Fokin, 2005, s. 160-164). Cyprian, as the principal moral teacher for the Carthaginian

Christians (Ezekiel 34:11-16; John 10:11-18; Cyprianus, 1996h, s. 554; Cyprianus, 1996g, s. 515; Cyprianus, 1996h, s. 557), in his original works – the treatises «On the Unity of the Universal Church,» «On the Lord's Prayer,» «To Quirinus,» and «To Fortunatus»¹³ – as well as in numerous letters, employing typological, typological-moral¹⁴, and allegorical (in some cases) methods of interpreting Holy Scripture, explores various theological questions: Christology and soteriology, ecclesiology and morality, eschatology and sacramentology, as well as symbolic arrhythmology. Nevertheless, the numbers «one» and «seven,» possessing symbolic meaning, «unite» the entire homiletic-epistolary complex of his writings. Therefore, with the help of these numbers, Cyprian reveals the teachings about the one, or true Church of Christ, about the one faith, about the one episcopate, and also about the seven churches of Christ.

It is important to note that among the works of Cyprian of Carthage, one of the first ecclesiological treatises has been preserved – „On the Unity of the Universal Church” (251), dedicated to the issues of the church schisms of Novatian in Rome and Felicissimus in Carthage and the acceptance of the fallen. In this work, Cyprian „views schisms and heresies as the invention of the devil (chapters 1-3) and defends the idea of the unity of the Church (chapters 4-9). He speaks of the disastrous consequences of church schisms, of the invalidity of the sacraments performed by schismatics (chapters 10-22); in the end, he once again calls on all believers to distance themselves from communion with schismatics and to maintain unity with their bishop and presbyters (chapters 23-26)” (Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 249). However, it should be borne in mind that the 4th and 5th chapters of the treatise „On the Unity of the Universal Church” exist in two versions: a short one („Primacy Text”; only one manuscript has survived intact), which speaks of the primacy of the Apostle Peter, and a longer one („Textus Receptus”; preserved in most manuscripts and first editions), which says nothing about this (Cyprien, 2006, s. 176-184). As a result, since the beginning of the 16th century, scholars have been divided into two groups: those who recognized the primacy of the Apostle Peter and those who rejected it as an interpolation of the 6th century. The situation changed only at the beginning of the 20th century, when J. Chapman proved that the short and long versions of chapters 4 and 5 of the treatise „On the Unity of the Universal Church” are not later interpolations, but modified and supplemented texts (Chapman, 1902, s. 246-254; 357-373; Chapman, 1903, s. 26-51; see also: Nichols, 1992, s. 254). In other words, Cyprian of Carthage wrote two versions of the text: first, a short version (the first edition), and some time later, a longer version (the second edition). This follows from the fact that, firstly, in 251, Cyprian, wishing to emphasize his respect for Cornelius, Pope of Rome († 253), as the successor of the Apostle Peter, sent him a short version of this treatise. And, secondly, in 255-256,

13 However, the last two treatises, that is, “To Quirinus” and “To Fortunatus”, are, in the narrow sense of the word, collections of biblical quotations, in which sacred texts are grouped according to thematic principles (Al’breht, 2005, s. 1706).

14 It should be borne in mind that Cyprian uses this method of interpretation for the sole purpose of reminding the Carthaginian Christians that they should strive daily to fulfill the commandments and commands of the Old and New Testaments (Panagopulos, 2013, s. 384).

a dispute arose between Cyprian and the Hieromartyr Stephen, Pope of Rome († 257), over the longer version of this work (the most probable hypothesis; Mattei, 2012, s. 47-53; Siniscalco, Mattei, 2006, s. 101-115).

As for the historical context, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the Church of Christ, represented by its best representatives – bishops, priests, and laity – fought against heresies and schisms. Their primary goal, in fulfillment of the «commandment» of the Savior of the world (John 17:21,11), was the restoration of church unity. However, while Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (about 130/140 – 198) opposed Gnostic heresies, Cyprian of Carthage opposed church schisms. As Martyr John (Popov) writes, «Saint Irenaeus directed his teaching against the Gnostics, who completely distorted Christian dogma, and established the principle of church unity as the unanimous recognition by all of the rule of faith handed down from the apostles. The schisms of Novatus, Felicissimus, and Novatian demonstrated that divisions were possible between true believers and those who venerated the same rule of faith. The tendency toward such schisms needed to be countered by a concept of the Church that would condemn even divisions that did not arise from distortions of the apostolic faith. Influenced by the struggle against the schisms of Novatus and Novatian, Saint Cyprian developed a concept of the Church according to which the foundation of ecclesiastical unity is the union of local churches uniformly organized and governed by the sole authority of a bishop» (Popov, 2006, s. 147-148). It should also be borne in mind that «in the period of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, it was not at all customary for a bishop to move from one cathedra to another: a bishop viewed himself as having entered into a spiritual, inseparable union with his flock» (Lebedev, 2006, s. 149). Based on this, Cyprian teaches that the true Church of Christ is only that where all believers observe two symbols of unity: one faith (internal unity) and one episcopate (external unity) (Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 253-256; Fokin, 2013, s. 669-672; Fokin, 2005, s. 185-195).

According to the teaching of Cyprian of Carthage, the Lord Jesus Christ founded the one Church of Christ on earth for the salvation of repentant sinners, or true Christians (Matthew 16:18; Cyprien, 2006, s. 184; Cyprianus, 1994d, s. 286; Cyprianus, 1996b, s. 432; Cyprianus, 1996h, s. 537; see also: Anonymus, 2008, s. 33-34). As a result of this, a single sacramental connection arose between Christ and the Church. It is no accident that the true Church of Christ is the true Bride of Christ, since she always remains faithful to the Heavenly Bridegroom (Cyprien, 2006, s. 186-191; see also: Pseudo-Victorinus, 2002, s. 352-357) and the true Mother of believers, since, having once given birth to them, she always nourishes and animates each of them (Cyprien, 2006, s. 182-191; Cyprien, 1996i, s. 571-572). Therefore, firstly, the most important property of the Church of Christ is one faith: «There is one God, one Christ, one His Church, one faith (fides una), one people, united into a whole unity of society by the union of consent» (Ephesians 4:5-6; Cyprianus, 2006, s. 240; see also: Cyprianus, 1994c, s. 205; Cyprianus, 1996a, s. 407). To reveal this ecclesiastical unity, Cyprian, using the typological method of interpreting Holy Scripture, cites various images (Cyprien, 2006, s. 184-186; Cyprianus, 1996a, s. 406-409; Cyprianus, 1996f, s. 474-477; Cyprianus, 1996i, s. 578). However, the most important of them

is the prototype of the unity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity: «The Lord says: I and the Father are one (John 10:30). And again about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit it is written: and these three are one (1 John 5:7). Who would think that this unity (*unitatem*), based on the immutability of the Divine and united with the heavenly mysteries, can be violated in the Church and fragmented by the discord of opposing desires? “No, he who does not preserve such unity (*unitatem*) does not keep the law of God, does not keep the faith (*fidem*) in the Father and the Son, does not adhere to the true path to salvation» (Cyprianus, 2006, s. 188-190; see also: Cyprianus, 1976, s. 108-109; Cyprianus, 1996f, s. 475-476; Cyprianus, 1996i, s. 578). Thus, the one faith of Christ, preserved throughout the centuries in the one Church of Christ, can only be one, since the Truth (John 14:6), or the Trinity of One Essence and Indivisible, is only one.

And, secondly, the most important property of the Church of Christ is the united episcopate: «Our Lord, whose commandments we must fear and keep, defining the dignity of a bishop (*episcopi*) and the principle of the structure of His Church (*ecclesiae suae*), said to Peter in the Gospel: I say to you: you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; and I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:18-19). From this follows the order in time and succession of the appointment of bishops and the organization of the Church, so that the Church is founded on the bishops, and every act of the Church is governed by the same primates» (Cyprianus, 1994b, s. 164; see also: Cyprianus, 2006, s. 176-182; Cyprianus, 1994a, s. 14). Or in another place we read: «The universal and one Church (*ecclesia quae catholica una*) is not torn apart or divided, but is united and strengthened by the bond of priests [that is, bishops. – Author], mutually united to one another» (Cyprianus, 1996c, s. 443; see also: Cyprianus, 1994d, s. 286). In other words, the words quoted here from the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 16:18-19) point not to the Apostle Peter, but to all the bishops as the successors of the Apostles, who «jointly govern the Universal Church» (Sidorov, Dobrocvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 254; see also: Quasten, 1986, s. 375) and are in complete agreement with each other (Cyprianus, 1994e, s. 301; Cyprianus, 1996d, s. 454; Cyprianus, 1996e, s. 465; Cyprianus, 1994d, s. 265). However, it should be borne in mind that, according to Cyprian's teaching, «the episcopate is one (*episcopatus unus*), and each [individual bishop] participates in it as a whole» (Cyprianus, 2006, s. 184; see also: Cyprianus, 1994d, s. 286), that is, «one bishop (*episcopus unus*) presides over [one] church» (Cyprianus, 1996c, s. 439), or «the bishop is in the church, and the church is in the bishop, and whoever is not with the bishop is not in the church (*episcopum in ecclesia esse et ecclesiam in episcopo et si qui cum episcopo non sit in ecclesia non esse*)» (Cyprianus, 1996c, s. 443). Based on this, as some scholars rightly believe, „it is clear from this that Christ's founding of the Church on the Apostle Peter alone was, for St. Cyprian, only a symbol of the Church's unity: Peter is the temporal beginning of the Church and its unity, but not its origin in the sense that the Church grew out of him, and its unity rests on its union with him, and specifically with him. The real principle, the operative cause of the

Church and its unity, both at the beginning and afterwards, is only Christ Himself, and not Peter. He is not the beginning of the Church and not the beginning of unity, but only the numerical unity with which Christ deigned to begin His Church. With this beginning, the Founder most clearly demonstrated that His Church must be forever one and unique. This – and nothing else – is the thought of Cyprian” (Sagarda, 2004, s. 515; Sagarda, Sagarda, 2004, s. 649-650; Koch, 1910, s. 22; see also: Hondzinskij, 2025, s. 24-25). Consequently, one faith and one episcopate, proceeding from the unity of the persons of the Holy Trinity, indicate that the one Church of Christ is only that in which all true believers preserve the succession from the apostles, both in matters of faith and in matters of the episcopate.

As for the doctrine of the seven churches of Christ, in the treatise «To Quirinus» – whom Cyprian of Carthage called his „dear son (fili carissime)” (Cyprianus, 1972b, s. 3) – he writes: „Likewise, in the First Book of Kings [we read]: ‘The barren woman has borne seven children, while she who had many children has grown weak’ (1 Samuel 2:5). And the seven sons signify the seven churches. For this reason, Paul wrote epistles to seven churches¹⁵, and seven churches are mentioned in the Apocalypse (Revelation 1:4), so that the number seven might be preserved; inasmuch as there are seven days in which God created the world, and seven angels who stand and abide before the face of God – as the angel Raphael says in the Book of Tobit (Tobit 12:15) – and the seven-branched lampstand in the Tabernacle of Testimony (Exodus 25:31), and the seven eyes of the Lord which survey the world (Zechariah 4:10), and the stone with seven eyes, as Zechariah says (Zechariah 3:9), and the seven spirits (Revelation 4:5), and the seven lampstands in the Apocalypse (Revelation 1:21), and the seven pillars upon which Wisdom built her house in the time of Solomon (Proverbs 9:1)” (Cyprianus, 1972b, s. 20-21). Furthermore, in his treatise «To Fortunatus» – the Bishop of Thuccabor, who participated in the African Council of September 256 – he adds: „But what of the seven brothers in the Book of Maccabees (2 Maccabees 7:1) – who, being born of the same womb and equal in valor, express through the mystery of their perfect death the fullness of the number seven? Thus, in their martyrdom, the seven brothers were united just as, in the divine economy, are the first seven days (which encompass seven thousand years); just as the seven spirits (Revelation 4:5); just as the seven angels who stand and converse before the face of God (Tobit 12:15); just as the seven-branched lampstand in the Tabernacle of Testimony (Exodus 25:31); and – in the Apocalypse – the seven golden lampstands (Revelation 1:12); and – in the writings of Solomon – the seven pillars upon which Wisdom built her house (Proverbs 9:1). And thus, the number seven embodied by these brothers signifies the seven Churches, in accordance with what we read in the First Book of Kings: ‘The barren woman has borne seven children’ (1 Samuel 2:5). And in Isaiah, where seven women seize hold of one man, demanding that his name be called upon them (Isaiah 4:1). And the Apostle Paul, mindful of this significant and apt number, writes to seven Churches. And in the Apocalypse, the Lord directs His divine commands and heavenly precepts to seven Churches and their angels. In this same manner, too, is this

15 These are the churches to which he wrote his epistles, namely, Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica.

very number found in the seven brothers, serving to express the fullness of lawful perfection. Clearly, the Mother – the source and root – is also united with the seven children; she, being herself the first and the one, and founded upon the rock in accordance with the Lord's word (Matthew 16:18), subsequently gave birth to the seven churches. Nor is it without reason that the Mother alone is present with her children amidst their sufferings. For the martyrs, by bearing witness through their suffering that they are sons of God, acknowledge but one Father – God – just as the Lord teaches in the Gospel, saying: „And call no one on earth your father, for you have one Father, who is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9) (Cyprianus, 1972a, s. 205-206). Thus, Cyprian of Carthage, in expounding the doctrine of the seven churches of Christ, designates the Church of Christ as the Mother who bore seven children – or seven brothers, or seven churches; that is to say, he transitions from Old Testament allusions to New Testament reality. In other words, according to Cyprian's teaching, there exists in the world either one Church of Christ, or seven churches of Christ.

4. Poetovio: Saint Victorinus of Poetovio

The next writer who pays special attention to the symbolic meaning of different numbers is Saint Victorinus of Poetovio (about 230 – 303/304), the first Latin interpreter of the Holy Scriptures (Dulaey, 2003, s. 97; Dulaey, 1997, s. 15; Dulaey, 1993a, s. 11; Dulaey, 1993b, s. 9), the first Christian writer of all the Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire (Bratož, 2002, s. 7, 13; Bratož, 2001, s. 313) and the first martyr of the Church of Poetovio (Mesjaceslov, 2013, s. 24; Hieronymus, 2009, s. 348-349; Martyrologium, 2005, s. 370). Victorinus, as the main teacher of morality for the Poetovian Christians (Ezekiel 34:11-16; John 10:11-18), in his original works – the treatise “On the Creation of the World,” the fragment “On the Life of Christ,” and the commentary “On Revelation” (Khandoga, 2022, s. 83-84; Handoga, 2022a, s. 34-36) – using allegorical, typological, and historical (in some cases) methods of interpreting the Holy Scriptures, explores various theological issues of cosmology and eschatology, Christology and soteriology, ecclesiology and morality, as well as symbolic arrhythmology¹⁶. However, the numbers “one,” “seven,” and “eight,” which have symbolic meaning, “unite” the entire exegetical and theological complex of his works¹⁷. Therefore, with the help of these numbers, Victorinus reveals the teachings about the first day of creation, the seventh day of rest and the eighth day of judgment, as well as the teachings about the seven churches of Christ, the seven groups of saints and the seven Christian virtues.

For Victorinus of Poetovio, the symbolism of the number “seven (septem)” is of par-

16 An integral part of this teaching is the Poetovian church calendar, since it mentions only seven church holidays, that is, five Lord's holidays – Nativity, Baptism, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, and two Theotokos holidays – Annunciation and Conception, as well as Sunday (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296, 299; Victorinus, 2017b, s. 303; Victorinus, 2017c, s. 112, 170-172; Handoga, 2024, s. 28-30; Handoga, 2022b s. 237-242; Bratož, 2002, s. 11-12, 18-19; Bratož, 2001, s. 321-324).

17 In turn, Pseudo-Victorinus of Poetovio (beginning of the 3rd century) in his homily «On the Ten Virgins» gives other symbolic numbers, that is, «five (quinque)» and «ten (decem)» (Pseudo-Victorinus, 2002, s. 352, 354; Khandoga, 2023, s. 7-8; Handoga, 2021b, s. 6-7), which are not found in the authentic works of Victorinus of Poetovio.

ticular importance, examples of which he “borrowed” not only from Holy Scripture, but from Holy Tradition¹⁸. As a result of this, from the eighth chapter of the treatise “On the Creation of the World” we learn that in the world there are “seven horns of the Lamb (Revelation 5:6), seven eyes of God (Zechariah 4:10), seven eyes made of an alloy of silver and lead (Zechariah 3:9), seven spirits (Revelation 4:5), seven torches burning before the throne of God (Revelation 4:5), seven golden candlesticks (Revelation 1:12), seven sheep (Leviticus 23:18; Numbers 28:11), seven women in Isaiah (Isaiah 4:1), seven churches in Paul, seven deacons (Acts 6:3), seven angels (Revelation 8:2; 15:1), seven trumpets (Revelation 8:6), seven seals of the book (Revelation 5:1), the seven weeks ending with Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-16), the seven weeks of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27), as well as the sixty-three weeks of Daniel, seven of every clean [cattle] in Noah’s ark (Genesis 7:2), the seven punishments of Cain (Genesis 4:15, 24), seven years for the repayment of debts (Deuteronomy 15:1), the lampstand with seven openings (Zechariah 4:2), the seven pillars of wisdom in the house of Solomon (Prov. 9:1)” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 298-299). There are also “seven heavens” and “seven spirits” in the Universe (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 297-298). Furthermore, the commentary on Revelation contains numerous passages that reveal the symbolic meaning of the number “seven” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 112, 122-128, 146, 160, 164-166, 188-194, 198, 222, 230-232, 248). However, in these examples, the heavenly and the earthly are so intertwined that it is difficult to separate one from the other. Therefore, the number seven has a heavenly-earthly origin.

Based on this, Victorinus of Poetovio asserts that “everything is governed by the seven-day number (*septinario numero dierum*): both heavenly and earthly” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295), that is, everything in the world exists harmoniously and is subject to a certain order established by its Creator. This follows, for example, from the fact that God “allocated” seven days for the creation of the world: “God produced this entire vast Universe in six days from nothing (*sex diebus ex nihilo*) to adorn His greatness, and He sanctified the seventh (*septimum*) [day] with a blessing, having rested [from] [His] works (Genesis 2:2-3) (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295-296). Moreover, in the treatise “On the Creation of the World” we read: “...therefore, to begin with, I will reflect on this week, which is the queen of all weeks, and, as far as I can, I will try to explain the day of power as its completion” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295)¹⁹. In other words, Victorinus “places” the history of the world and humanity in the first seven days, or the first seven thousand years (the so-called con-

18 For example, according to his teaching, the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ consists of seven periods (including birth and death). In addition, Victorinus cites seven examples from Holy Scripture to confirm the human and divine natures of the Savior of the world (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 299; Victorinus, 2017b, s. 303; Handoga, 2021a, s. 150-153; Marin, 2021, s. 163-168; Marin, 2004, s. 201-205).

19 For Victorinus, the «day of power (*uirtutis diem*)» (Psalm 109:3) probably corresponds both to the first day of creation, when God revealed His creative power (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295), and to the eighth day of judgment, when He will again reveal His power, but this time as a formidable Judge and Retributer (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 297; Victorinus, 2017c, s. 112).

cept of “Great Week”)²⁰: “Also Isaiah and some of his companions broke the Sabbath (Isaiah 1:13; Hosea 2:13), so that that true and righteous Sabbath of the seventh millennium (*uerum illud et iustum sabbatum septimo miliario annorum*) might be observed. That is why the Lord designated each thousand years by these seven days. For it is thus stated: In Your sight, O Lord, a thousand years are as one day (Psalm 89:5; 2 Peter 3:8). Therefore, in the sight of God, every millennium abides; for I count the seven eyes of the Lord (Zechariah 4:10). For this reason, as I have said, that true Sabbath is the seventh millennium (*uerum illud sabbatum est septimum miliarium*), in which Christ will reign with His elect” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 297). Thus, for as many days as it took God to create the world, that is how many days it will exist.

Victorinus of Poetovio, following Philo of Alexandria, particularly emphasizes the first day of creation and the seventh day of rest (naturally, imbuing them with Christian meaning). The point is that, according to Victorinus’s teaching, on the first day God created light (Genesis 1:1; 1:3), twelve angels of the day and twelve angels of the night, and established the counting of time, that is, twelve daytime hours and twelve nighttime hours (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295, 300). Moreover, on this same day, the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 299; Victorinus, 2017b, s. 303; Victorinus, 2017c, s. 112). As for the seventh day of rest, on which God not only ceased to create (Genesis 2:2-3), but began to provide for the world (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295-296), on this same day the “first man” – Adam – fell and the “second man, [or one] of the human race” – the Lord Jesus Christ – was crucified on the cross (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296, 298-299; Victorinus, 2017b, s. 303; Victorinus, 2017c, s. 112, 160). Therefore, unlike Philo, who teaches that God the Father takes care of everything in the world every day, Victorinus points to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who once sacrificed Himself for the entire human race and also constantly provides for creation.

Based on this, Victorinus of Poetovio and the Poetovian Christians, firstly, knew that they were living at the end of the sixth day of creation (Victorinus 2017a, s. 296); secondly, they were expecting the beginning of the seventh day of rest for the millennial reign

20 This concept was first set forth by Anonymus in «The Epistle of Barnabas» (about 130) (Anonymus, 1971, s. 182-184; Hvalvik, 2021, s. 282-283; Osvalda, 1995, s. 150) and was developed in the works of many holy fathers, church writers, and other authors of the Ante-Nicene period, with whose literary heritage Victorinus of Poetovio was undoubtedly familiar.

A distinctive feature of this concept is its connection with various traditions – Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian – as each of them contains the doctrine of the cosmic week. From the Hellenistic tradition, the division of the world’s existence into seven millennia is borrowed, from the Jewish tradition, the rest of the seventh day, and from the Christian tradition, the eternity of the eighth day. Thus, the typology of the week is revealed here, that is, the six days of creation point to the time of this world, and the seventh day of rest points to the time of the future world (Akimov, 2021, s. 184; Daniélou, 1991, s. 399). The eighth day is “the beginning of another world” (Anonymus, 1971, s. 186), that is, the beginning of eternal life.

We read something completely different in some theological studies by Archdeacon Vladimir Vasilik (b. 1970), Doctor of Historical Sciences, Candidate of Philological Sciences, and Candidate of Theology, dedicated to the teachings of Victorinus of Poetovio: “The spiral model of history present in St. Victorinus is connected with the theology of recapitulation, when one similar event precedes the next, which occurs at a higher level...” (Vasilik, 2025a, s. 67-68; Vasilik, 2022, s. 91; Vasilik, 2021, s. 42; see also: Vasilik, 2025b). Naturally, we cannot agree with this statement, since it contradicts the views of Victorinus of Poetovio. He was a supporter of the linear (chronological) model of history and, accordingly, in his works “divides the entire history of mankind into 6 millennia and presents the final 7th millennium as the glorious earthly kingdom of Christ and the saints” (Tkachev, 2024, s. 540; see also: Handoga, 2015, s. 30; Handoga, 2010, s. 82; Panagopoulos, 2013, s. 396; Fokin, 2005, s. 267; Fokin, 2004, s. 460).

with the Lord Jesus Christ (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 297); and thirdly, they were preparing for the Last Judgment, or the Day of Judgment, since they believed that after the end of the seventh day of rest the eighth day of judgment, or the first day of creation, would begin (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 297, 299; Victorinus, 2017c, s. 112; Victorinus, 2017b, s. 303). Moreover, Victorinus of Poetovio and the Poetovian Christians knew that from the eighth day of judgment eternal rest would begin (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 188). Thus, the number „seven” indicates the period during which God created the world, as well as the time He allotted for its existence (Handoga, 2019, s. 202-203; Handoga, 2016, s. 216-219; Fokin, 2005, s. 266-269; Fokin, 2004, s. 460-461).

Furthermore, Victorinus of Poetovio, following Anonymus and Cyprian of Carthage, expounds on the teaching of the seven churches of Christ in his interpretation of the first chapters of the Revelation of the Apostle John the Theologian (Revelation 1-3). However, Victorinus does not list these seven churches by name, as “their historical reality is of little interest to Bishop of Poetovio” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 124; Dulaey, 1993a, s. 160). According to him, these seven churches, which were located in Asia Minor, or throughout the world (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 124), were one Church of Christ: “So by these seven churches (septem ecclesiis) understand one Church (una ecclesia)” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 128; see also: Anonymus, 2008, s. 33; Cyprianus, 1972b, s. 20-21; Cyprianus, 1972a, s. 205-206). In support of his words, Victorinus refers to the letters of the Apostle Paul, which indicate that “the seven (septem) churches (ecclesias) named [by him] constitute one Universal [Church] (unam catholicam [ecclesiam])” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 124)²¹. This follows from the fact that Paul, firstly, wrote only seven letters addressed to seven churches, that is, to Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica; secondly, he wrote several letters (but no more than seven) to individuals; and thirdly, he himself testified to this in his First Epistle to Timothy (1 Timothy 3:15; Victorinus, 2017c, s. 124). However, in comparing these seven churches, Victorinus uses an example “from military language known to him, since a Roman legion was stationed in Poetovio at the residence of the governor of Upper Pannonia” (Pani, 2005, s. 156). Therefore, he compares one of these seven churches with a small detachment of soldiers, and seven churches with the entire army: “...what he (that is, the Apostle John the Theologian. – Author) says to one [Church], he says to all [the churches]²²: for it makes no difference whether someone speaks to a small detachment of soldiers or through him to the entire army” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 124). Consequently, for Victorinus, each of the seven churches represents the entire Church of Christ and, accordingly, all seven churches together represent the fullness of the Church of Christ (that is, 1 = 7 and 7 = 1).

21 Here Victorinus of Poetovio uses the expression „catholica ecclesia,” or „universal Church,” which, firstly, etymologically derives from the Greek term „ἡ Καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία,” meaning „universal church”; secondly, it acquired symbolic significance in the history of Christianity (Pani, 2005, s. 156). Moreover, for Victorinus, who adhered to the opinion of Anonymous and Cyprian, each local church is the Universal Church, or the whole church, because the whole is revealed in the particular (Ivliev, 2014, s. 156; Popov, 2006, s. 150).

22 This principle, that is, to speak to one means to speak to all, Victorinus of Poetovio borrowed from Irenaeus of Lyons, Anonymus and Tertullian (about 155/160 – after 220) (see: Irénée, 1965, s. 520; Anonymus, 2008, s. 33; Tertullien, 2004, s. 308).

Developing the doctrine of the one and only Church of Christ, Victorinus of Poetovio, following the Apostle Paul (Corinthians 1:15-28; 2:9-19; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:14-16; 4:12-16; 5:23-32), Tertullian (Tertullien, 1984, s. 182) and Cyprian of Carthage (Cyprien, 2006, s. 240), testifies that the head of the Church of Christ is the incarnate Son of God – the Lord Jesus Christ, who not only founded it, but also is this Church itself (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 200). Therefore, “it is impossible to separate the Church from Christ” (Stojadinov, 2016, s. 71). Moreover, “the unity of the Church is something more than a numerical unity. The Church is not simply one, but one unity; unity is the principle of its existence” (Davidenkov, 2013, s. 506). Based on this, there can only be one Church of Christ in the world, consisting of many churches, since “the Church (ecclesia) is the Body of Christ (corpus Christi), adorned with its members, and each [member] must correspond to its place” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 200). Thus, according to the teaching of Victorinus, there is an indivisible unity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Church of Christ.

An important aspect of Victorinus of Poetovio ecclesiology is that for nearly two thousand years, not only the Lord Jesus Christ but also the Holy Spirit has been active in the Church of Christ (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 126). As V. N. Losskij rightly observes, “since the Church is the work of both Christ and the Holy Spirit, the teaching about it has a double basis: thus, ecclesiology simultaneously has its roots in Christology and pneumatology” (Losskij, 2020, s. 317). Therefore, “the Christian life of grace is simultaneously Christocentric and pneumatological” (Evtich, 2009, s. 379). To explain this clearly, Victorinus, using the typological method of interpreting the Holy Scripture, explains the passage from the Book of Prophet Isaiah about one man and seven women (Isaiah 4:1): „We read that this image is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah – of seven women who will lay hold of one man. The one man is Christ, not born of seed. The seven women are the churches, receiving their bread and clothed in their tunics, striving to remove their shame so that His name may be called upon them. The ‘bread’ is the Holy Spirit, who nourishes unto eternal life; [‘their’] – promised to them through faith, as ‘their tunics’ – that is, promised to them, in which they desire to shelter themselves...” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 126). Therefore, according to Victorinus, the seven women who seized upon one man are a type of the seven churches of Christ; the one man is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, or God-man; the one bread which they eat is a type of the Holy Spirit.

Also Victorinus of Poetovio in his commentary “On Revelation,” when interpreting the Revelation of the Apostle John the Theologian, instead of the traditional exegesis of the second and third chapters, which contain “messages” (Nebol’sin, 2010, s. 60), or “prophetic statements” (Ivliev, 2015, s. 43) of the Seer to the seven churches of Asia Minor²³, offers readers or listeners a text addressed to seven groups of saints, or an educated Christian community (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 128-144). It is no coincidence that this

23 That is, the Church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7), the Church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11), the Church of Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17), the Church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29), the Church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6), the Church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) and the Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22).

work begins with the words: “The beginning of the book promises blessedness to him who reads, listens, and observes (Revelation 1:3), so that from here he may diligently learn the matter and observe the instruction” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 110). Thus, this text is Victorinus’ spiritual testament, firstly, to his flock, the Poetovian Christians; secondly, to his contemporaries, Jews and pagans, who may have been interested in Christianity; and, thirdly, to future generations.

It should be borne in mind, however, that for Victorinus of Poetovio, these seven groups of saints represent, on the one hand, a Christian community consisting of an unknown number of Poetovian Christians who needed daily strengthening of their faith through the “living word,” visual example, and study of spiritual literature; and, on the other hand, they represent seven types of Christians of the Church of Poetovio, distinguished from each other by their sins and virtues (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 128-144; Pani, 2005, s. 152; Bratož, 2002, s. 12; Bratož, 2001, s. 324). Therefore, most likely, they not only prayed daily and performed good deeds, but also read the Holy Scriptures and the works of the holy fathers of the Ante-Nicene period. Moreover, this Christian community, following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, was united. This follows, for example, from the fact that, when discussing the first and fifth groups of saints, he uses only the singular: “... until the last time (*nouissimum*), it is necessary to carry out the work of love (*amoris opera*), which is the principal commandment (*principale mandatum*) (Matthew 22:38). [...] For it is not enough for a tree (*arborem*) to live [and blossom] and not to bear fruit (*fructum*) (Luke 13:6-9); so it is not enough to be called a Christian (*christianum*) and to acknowledge oneself as such, but not to have Christian work (*christiani opera*)” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 132, 140). Consequently, Victorinus, addressing the Poetovian Christians, called them to “daily likeness” to the Lord, that is, to holiness (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

Also, Victorinus of Poetovio, following the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:34-40), the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 13:1-13), and Hermas, points to seven Christian virtues, or seven moral qualities²⁴, necessary for Poetovian Christians: faith and patience, mercy and love, repentance and humility, and work (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 128-130). Nevertheless, Victorinus most likely considers mercy (*miser cordia*) and love (*amor*) to be the main Christian virtues, since “sacrificial love is also the realization of love for God” (Garnak, 2007, s. 105). Based on this, to be a true Christian, one must have or strive to acquire these moral qualities (Victorinus 2017c, s. 130). Moreover, in his treatise “On the Creation of the World,” Victorinus points to another Christian virtue – piety (*pietas*), which is actually a combination of the seven aforementioned moral qualities (Victorinus 2017a, s. 296, 298).

The whole point is that Victorinus of Poetovio, using the typological method of interpreting the Holy Scriptures and an allusion to the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11:2-

24 His treatise «The Shepherd» is the first to provide a «list» of seven virtues. However, it mentions slightly different moral qualities than Victorinus’s commentary on «On Revelation» (only two virtues are identical: faith and charity). Furthermore, Hermas, unlike Victorinus, teaches that these moral qualities are acquired by believers in a specific sequence: «from faith comes abstinence, from abstinence comes simplicity, from simplicity comes innocence, from innocence comes modesty, and from modesty comes strict order and charity» (Hermas, 2014, s. 51).

3), “connects” the Christian virtue of piety with the sixth spirit, with the sixth heaven, and also with the sixth day of creation, on which God created the first man and on which the Savior of the world was born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 2:6-7; Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296, 298; Victorinus 2017c, s. 112; Handoga, 2019, s. 197-199; Handoga, 2016, s. 219-223; Fokin, 2005, s. 267-268; Fokin, 2004, s. 460-461). This indicates that the first people, Adam and Eve, possessed such a moral quality as piety in Paradise before the Fall (Genesis 2:25); that the New Adam and the New Eve, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Most Holy Theotokos, possessed this Christian virtue in their earthly life (Matthew 1:22-23); that the “beginnings” of such a moral quality as piety are given to every Christian in the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation (John 3:3; 3:5-6; 3:11). In other words, “the restoration of the ‘first Adam,’ essentially accomplished in Christ, continues in every Christian. It begins in Baptism, which is thereby represented as a new creation and a return to paradise...” (Danielu, 2013, s. 29). Thus, according to the teachings of Victorinus of Poetovio, there are seven churches of Christ, seven church holidays, seven groups of saints and seven Christian virtues in the world. However, by analogy with the one Lord Jesus Christ and the one Holy Spirit, there is also only one Church of Christ, or one Universal Church – the Poetovian Church; only one group of saints – the Poetovian Christians community and only one Christian virtue – piety, which Victorinus undoubtedly possessed and, perhaps, some Poetovian Christians.

Conclusion

The One Lord Almighty, or the Trinity Consubstantial and Indivisible, firstly, created the world observing mathematically precise proportions (Wisdom 11:21; John 11:9). Therefore, „the mathematical sciences are a gift from God; they bring order and equality, while the devil’s deeds are countless” (Larionova, 2023, s. 112). And secondly, God the Creator established the temporal boundaries of the universe’s existence. Therefore, „the universe is not only ,heaven and earth,’ that is, the world realized in space, but, crucially for biblical understanding, also OLAM – the totality of the temporal extent of world history, delimited by the first and last days” (Grilihes, 2017, s. 408). Naturally, this was known to most of the church fathers, church and other writers of antiquity, who eventually became proponents of the theology of numbers, or symbolic arrhythmology. However, unfortunately, no theological works devoted to this teaching have survived (the exception is the book “The Numbers” by the prophet Moses the God-seer, which is partly devoted to the symbolic meaning of certain numbers). Based on this, the theology of numbers is one of the least studied theological topics and is supposedly included in other topics such as, for example, cosmology and eschatology. However, this is not the case. The whole point is that symbolic, or perfect numbers, prevailing over historical numbers not only in the Holy Scriptures, but also in the works of Philo of Alexandria, Hermas, Anonymous, Saints Cyprian of Carthage and Victorinus of Poetovio, are filled with deep theological meaning.

The first among the Ante-Nicene writers is Philo of Alexandria, who, in his treatises “On the Creation of the World” and “Allegory of the Laws,” reveals the symbolic signif-

icance of the numbers “one” and “seven.” For him, the number “one” is associated with God, the Monad, the Divine Logos, the intelligible world, the visible world, the first man, the divine garden, and the first day of creation; the number “seven” is associated with all possible variations in both the corporeal and incorporeal worlds, the number of days, as well as with the seventh day of rest. Philo of Alexandria ascribes particular significance to the one God, the one Logos, the one visible world, and the first man. It should be noted that, according to his teaching, the one visible world was created by the one God together with the one Logos in the image of the one Logos, and the first man was created in the image of the one God. Furthermore, as regards the first day of creation and the seventh day of rest, these days are symbolic as a result of the uniqueness of what happened on them.

The successor of Philo of Alexandria’s “work” is Hermas, who in his treatise “The Shepherd” reveals the symbolic meaning of the numbers “one” and “seven.” For him, the number “one” is associated with God the Father, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, the Elder Church, the Tower Church, repentance, the prophet, and the shepherd; the number “seven” is associated with the virtues. Hermas ascribes particular significance to God the Father, the Son of God, the Elder Church, and the Tower Church. It should be noted that, according to his teaching, the Elder Church is inseparably united with God the Father, and the Tower Church with the Son of God. Furthermore, as for the seven virtues necessary for every Christian, they can be acquired only in the Tower Church, or in the one Church of Christ.

After Hermas, Anonymous devoted attention to this teaching, revealing the symbolic meaning of the numbers “one” and “seven” in his work “The Muratorian Fragment.” For him, the number “one” is associated with the Lord Jesus Christ, the book of “Acts of the Holy Apostles,” the blessed Apostle Paul and the Universal Church; the number “seven” is associated with the churches of Christ. Anonymous ascribes particular significance to the one Lord Jesus Christ and the one Universal Church, as they are inseparably united. Moreover, as regards the seven churches of Christ, which have an inseparable unity among themselves, they constitute one whole, that is, a single Universal Church.

Cyprian of Carthage serves as the successor to the „work” of Hermas; in his treatises „On the Unity of the Catholic Church,” „On the Lord’s Prayer,” „To Quirinus,” and „To Fortunatus,” as well as in numerous letters, he elucidates the symbolic significance of the numbers „one” and „seven.” For him, the number „one” is associated with the one Lord Jesus Christ, the one Church of Christ, the one faith, and the one episcopate; the number „seven” is associated with the churches of Christ. Like Anonymous, Cyprian attaches particular significance to the one Lord Jesus Christ and the one Church of Christ, for they are inextricably united with one another. Furthermore – with regard to the seven churches of Christ, which share an indissoluble unity among themselves – they constitute a single whole: namely, the one Universal Church; for they share a single Mother who not only gave them birth once but continually nourishes and animates each one of them.

After Cyprian of Carthage, Victorinus of Poetovio devoted attention to this teaching. In his treatise “On the Creation of the World,” a fragment of “On the Life of Christ,” and his commentary “On the Revelation,” he reveals the symbolic significance of the numbers

“one,” “seven,” and “eight.” For him, the number “one” is associated with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church of Christ, and the first day of creation; the number “seven” is associated with all possible variations in both the corporeal and incorporeal worlds, the number of days, the periods of the life of the Savior of the world, examples from Holy Scripture of His human and divine natures, the Churches of Christ, groups of saints, Christian virtues, church holidays, and the seventh day of rest; the number “eight” is associated with the eighth day of judgment. Victorinus ascribes particular significance to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church of Christ, as they are inextricably linked. Furthermore, firstly, regarding the seven Churches of Christ, they have an inseparable unity among themselves and constitute a single whole; secondly, concerning the seven church feasts, seven groups of saints, and seven Christian virtues, their appearance is possible only in the one Church of Christ; and thirdly, regarding the eighth day of judgment, or the first day of creation, this day is special, as it is the beginning of a new week, or the beginning of eternal life.

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