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**ΔΗΛΩΣΙΣ AND ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ : THE SEPTUAGINT,
PHILO, AND SOME LATE RHETORICAL TEXTS¹**

The Greek words δῆλωσις and ἀλήθεια are the terms used in the Septuagint to translate *urim* and *thummim* in the Hebrew Bible. The Urim and the Thummim are objects connected with the high priest and the cult, but exactly what they are is not known. In Hebrew both words are plurals, and are usually thought to be derived from the roots אור and תר, so if translated literally, they would mean « lights » and « perfections ».

The Urim and Thummim are first mentioned in Exod 28,30 and Lev 8,8. We learn from these passages that they were placed in the breastplate of judgment worn by Aaron the high priest, so that he would have them over his heart when he went before the Lord. Something about their function may be gleaned from Num 27,21, I Sam 14,41 (LXX), 28,6. It emerges from these verses that the Urim and the Thummim, and especially the former, were objects by which one could consult or inquire about the will of God. There seems to be an allusion to the same function in Ezra 2,63 and Neh 7,65 (cf. also I Esdr 5,40), which have an identical form in the massoretic text. However, these verses seem also to refer to the Urim and Thummim as insignia by which one may identify an authentic priest or high priest. Similarly, according to the blessing of Moses, in Deut 33,8, the Thummim and Urim are to be given to the tribe of Levi, presumably as a kind of symbol of the tribe's priestly prerogatives. No biblical passage, however, gives a full description or account of the Urim and the Thummim, and accordingly, many

1. I am confident that I speak for many other alumni of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan in offering congratulations to padre Cantalamessa on the occasion of this *Festschrift* and in thanking him for his wonderful contributions to the theological disciplines over the years.

suggestions about them have been put forward. They may have been lots made of stone or wood, or perhaps a gem, connected in some way with a form of authenticating light².

In the present study, however, the concern will not be with the Urim and the Thummim as concrete entities. Rather, the intention is to examine more fully the most common translation of the pair of terms that we find in the Septuagint, namely, δῆλωσις or δῆλοι, and ἀλήθεια. Our first task will be to determine the possible sources of the interpretation of the two terms in Philo of Alexandria, by reference to some later rhetorical texts. At that point, it will be possible to offer an additional, if speculative explanation of the origin of the Greek translation itself.

Before turning to Philo, however, let us survey briefly the current views on the terms *dêlôsis* and *alêtheia* in the Septuagint. The prevalent opinion today seems to be that both words represent more or less correct « etymological » or « semi-etymological » translations, based on perceived derivations from the Hebrew roots אור (« light ») and תם (« complete », « having integrity »). However, these renderings may also be characterized as « descriptive », especially when compared to other Greek translations. In a later book of the Septuagint we find *urim* and *thummim* translated by φωτί ζοντα and τέλεια (II Esdr 2,63 ; cf. 17,65), and in the second century versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, we find φωτισμοί and τελειότητες or τελειώσεις³. These later translations are more literal than those in the Septuagint of the Pentateuch, in accord with a general tendency towards greater literalism in some later Septuagint books and in « the Three ». However, even if the later translations can be described as more literal, the terms δῆλωσις and ἀλήθεια are viewed as legitimate etymological renderings. This is because, as was already pointed out by Z. Frankel in 1851, one finds the same or approximating translation correspondences in other passages. The word ἀλήθεια is found for תם (« integrity ») in Prov 28,6, and the verb δηλοῦν is used for יר (hiphil = « instruct ») in a number of passages⁴. The latter correspondence occurs most notably in Deut 33,10, just two verses after the mention of the Thummim and the Urim (the normal order is reversed here in the Hebrew

2. For recent treatments of the topic, see J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York, 1991, pp. 507-511 ; and the comprehensive work of C. VAN DAM, *The Urim and Thummim : A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel*, Winona Lake, 1997.

3. For the translations of « the Three », see C. VAN DAM, *Urim*, p. 84.

4. See Z. FRANKEL, *Ueber den Einfluss der palästinischen Exegese auf die alexandrinische Hermeneutik*, Leipzig, 1851, pp. 100-101. Cf. C. H. DODD, *The Bible and the Greeks*, London, 1935, pp. 30, 70-71 n. 3.