VOLKER HENNING DRECOLL

Basil of Caesarea as Exegete

Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
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Mohr Siebeck

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An Analysis of His *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*

Mohr Siebeck

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Table of Contents

Preface VII

Chapter 1: Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*: Admiring God's Creation 1
a) New Approaches to *Gen.* 1 in the Fourth Century before Basil 2
b) Basil's Homiletic Purpose 15

Chapter 2: The Defeated Opinions 27
a) Epicurean Denial of Providence 27
b) Aristotelian Cosmology 31
c) Inner-Platonic Discussions about Matter 33
d) Stoics 39
e) Astrology 40
f) Manichaeism 47
g) Natural Science 50
h) Judaism and "Anomeans" 51

Chapter 3: Basil's Origenism 59
a) Basil: Not an Author of the *Philocaly* 59
b) Basil about Origen in *On the Holy Spirit* 61
c) Basil and the Beginning of the Origenist Controversy in 374 66
d) Basil as an Origenist in His *Homilies on Psalms*? 71
e) A Real Origenist on *Gen.* 1: Didymus' Two-Level Exegesis 88
f) Basil's Rejection of Allegories 96

Chapter 4: The Deeper Sense 101
a) Which Text of *Gen.* 1 Basil Has Explained 102
b) The Preacher and His Audience According to the Prefaces 108
c) The Deeper Sense and Moral Exhortations 114

Chapter 5: Theology: God the Creator and His Logos 131
a) How to Describe God 131
b) The Trinity Causes Creation, but Not Evil 141
c) The Boundary between Creator and Creatures 146

Chapter 6: Beyond the Alternative of Authentic and Inauthentic: Some Observations on the Two *Homilies on the Creation of Humans* 153
a) Basil's Writing Process 153
b) The *Homilies on the Creation of Humans* 156
c) Basilian Substance in the *Homilies on the Creation of Humans*? 159
d) A Comparable Case: *On Baptism* 171
e) Another Comparable Case: *Explanation of Isaiah* 176
f) Not a Comparable Case: The *Homily against the Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomeans* 186

Epilogue 189

Abbreviations of Biblical Books 201

Bibliography
I. Sources 203
II. Secondary Literature 220

Indices
I. Biblical References 243
II. Ancient Sources 248
III. Names and Places 259
IV. Topics 265

Preface

This book deals with Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*. This work has found some attention in scholarship that was mainly concerned with two questions: 1) How did Basil use pagan science? 2) What kind of cosmology is presented by the author? On both questions, substantial progress has been made by the impressive monograph of Charlotte Köckert. In addition to this, the monograph of Rainer Henke provides important insights into the use of botanic and zoological details in the last three homilies (though his principal aim is to elaborate on Ambrose's use of Basil). The results of the work of Karl Gronau, stressing Basil's dependence upon Posidonius, cannot be maintained.[1] Even so, the notes of Mario Naldini in his bilingual translation and the apparatus locorum similium of Amand de Mendieta and Stig Rudberg in the GCS volume offer rich information about possible sources. The present book, however, does not aim to delve into the "Quellenforschung" or the cosmological concepts of Basil. It starts with the observation made by Köckert that the homiletic purpose and strategy of the exegesis has to be taken into further consideration. The exact combination of exegesis and homiletic purposes is at the center of the following chapters.

Basil's explicit rejection of allegorical exegesis in his *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* has puzzled scholars. It seems to contradict the impression we get from Basil's *Homilies on Psalms* and the overall assumption that Basil was profoundly indebted to Origenism, at least as an exegete. Several strategies were developed in order to relativize his rejection of allegory. Either this was considered to be a later stage of Basil's intellectual development, due to an influence of Diodore of Tarsus (though this influence could not be established in detail), or the topic of the homilies (allegory would be allowed while speaking about *Psalms*, but not when *Gen.* 1 is at stake), or even simply the pastoral intention of the bishop.[2] The

[1] Cf. already Amand de Mendieta, "Préparation," 361. Gronau, *Poseidonios*, 7–112, aims to prove Basil's dependence upon a lost *Commentary on the Timaeus* by Posidonius. His parallel examinations of text passages are regularly vague and related to comparable content, esp. for aspects of natural science. His approach to "Quellenforschung" is based upon the hypothesis that Posidonius is the unique, central source of Stoic natural philosophy so that nearly all texts related to natural science that sound somehow Stoic could be led back to Posidonius. This is unconvincing from a methodological point of view.

[2] For the classical position on the influence of Diodore, see Gribomont, *Origénisme*, criticized by Lim, "Politics;" and for the pastoral intention or just the biblical text in question as reasons for the refutation of allegorism, see Girardi, *Interprete della Scrittura*, 15–16.

following chapters develop a different view. It is not the rejection of allegory that must be relativized, but common assumptions about Basil's Origenism and his use of allegorizing methods.

For this purpose, the following chapters aim to contextualize Basil's exegesis of *Gen.* 1 within the exegetical approaches to *Gen.* 1 in the mid-fourth century, neglected in scholarship on Basil so far. This elucidates the combination of exegetical techniques and homiletic purposes in the work that can be contextualized in the exegetical discourse about *Gen.* 1 in the fourth century CE (chapter 1). Furthermore, Basil's intention was not simply to provide an acceptable version of science to his audience, but in fact he took a clear position in several philosophical debates of his time (chapter 2). His exegetical method cannot be traced back to an overall Origenism. Already in the *Homilies on Psalms*, only very few homilies use allegorical explanations, and even there it can be questioned whether Basil considered himself to be an Origenist. The idea of a development can be applied successfully to the collection of homilies that explain various psalms. So, a contrast between the *Homilies on Psalms* on the one side and the *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* on the other is a shortcut. Basil seems, though, to be increasingly reluctant toward allegorization, which can be related to his knowledge about the very first steps of the Origenist controversy in 374/375 (chapter 3).

Special attention should be paid to the moralizing exegesis of Basil, especially in the second half of his *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*. Basil clearly rejected allegorism, yet he favored paraenetic applications of exegetical observations or even a "deeper sense" of Scripture (chapter 4). This is based upon his theory of concepts (developed already in the controversy with Eunomius) and the consequences he drew from it for theology and ontology. It is neither a Stoic concept of substance or matter nor an apophatic theology that forms the theological basis for Basil's explanation of *Gen.* 1, but a specific evaluation of the biblical wording in the frame of an overall theory about language and concepts (chapter 5).

Finally, the question as to whether the two *Homilies on the Creation of Humans* should be linked to the nine *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* is considered anew. The vague idea that the homilies contain thoughts of Basil but were not edited by him in his lifetime is discussed. A detailed analysis of the structure of these two homilies provides new insights into the process of redaction that produced the texts that we have today. This is contextualized by a comparison with two other works that are ascribed to Basil in the manuscript tradition, namely *On Baptism* and the *Explanation of Isaiah*. The result of this is that in the case of Basil we can no longer apply the dichotomy of authentic or inauthentic to all works transmitted under his name, but have to think in terms of works edited in his lifetime, on the one hand, and others that were arranged and published only after his death, on the other. They are not forgeries or mere false attributions to Basil – that is, really "pseudo-Basil" – but belong to a process in which after the

early death of Basil monastic circles tried to deliver more of what he could not accomplish himself. Thus, not every passage of these works can be attributed to Basil, nor can these works be totally neglected while working on Basil. Only a detailed and careful analysis of these works and their redaction processes allows us to figure out more precisely what in these works may be traced back to Basil himself.

At the end of this preface, I would like to say thanks to a series of colleagues who read a former unpublished version of this book and made important suggestions: Mark DelCogliano, Johannes Zachhuber, and Matthieu Cassin. I am very grateful for their collegial advice, encouragement, and all comments. For additional exchange, I would like to say thanks also to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Charlotte Köckert. My recent work on Basil caused a new cooperation with Giulio Maspero and Vito Limone to which I am looking forward. In Tübingen, the reading and the remarks of Sara Contini, Colten Cheuk-Yin Yam, Benjamin Gleede, and David DeMarco proved to be of special value to me. I am very grateful to Christoph Markschies and all the editors of "Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum" for accepting my book in the series.

The technical side of the book took me the last year. I would not have been able to manage this in spite of my daily duties without the substantial help of my student assistants, Rebekka Bernhard, Eli Donner, David Schmalzhaf, Josephin Friedrich, and Stefanie Steichele. The English text was carefully revised by Sara Contini and finally set up by Rachel Martens, who managed to copyedit the whole thing and brought it into its final state. I am well aware of the fact that this is more or less a German book written in English. Nonetheless, I hope the accessibility as an English text eclipses what has been left from German intricacy. The publisher house Mohr Siebeck accompanied my work with constant interest over the last years and welcomed also this book. I would especially like to thank Tobias Stäbler and Markus Kirchner.

Last but not least, my thanks go to the participants of my Oberseminar that takes place once a week in room 320 of the Tübingen Faculty. While those who attend in person share not only the wine, but must bear also the severe look of an icon of Nilus of Ancyra, the open exchange is shared by all, also by those who attend via Zoom, even in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic when I started writing this book. Over the years, many different texts were read, and participants and guests came and left. The common interest in Patristic texts and the willingness to deal even with the obscure sides they often exhibit made it always one of the most rewarding appointments of my week. Therefore, this book is dedicated to the participants of my Oberseminar. Often, they just understand the texts better than I do.

Tübingen, Easter 2024 Volker Henning Drecoll

Chapter 1

Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*: Admiring God's Creation

Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* are homilies, and also a commentary.[1] They belong to a mixed literary genre. The introductions, the prayers at the end, the direct speech to the audience, the self-presentation of the bishop as preacher – all this fits in the genre of homilies.[2] The explanation of the verses, however, is sometimes lengthy, deals extensively with exegetical problems, considers various possible explanations, and rejects different opinions. Pages of this work correspond to a commentary rather than normal homilies. In the case of Origen, two separate works existed: A *Commentary on Genesis* that is transmitted only in fragments, and *Homilies on Genesis* that are only known in Rufinus' Latin translation.[3] Commentary and homilies were different, in style, and in methods. In the homilies, *Gen.* 1 is interpreted in one homily,[4] whereas the commentary seems to be much longer, at least if we consider the length of Origen's exegesis of *Gen.* 1:14.[5] Of course, we could add that Origen was presumably an exception. For example, the *Commentary on Daniel* of Hippolytus was much closer to homilies.[6] Since Hippolytus' work on the Pentateuch is transmitted only in fragments (two of them deal with *Gen.* 1[7]), this is less clear for his exegesis of *Gen.* 1. In any case, Basil decided not to write a commentary, but to use a mixed literary genre: homilies that looked like a commentary for certain passages.

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[1] Cf. Köckert, *Christliche Kosmologie*, 316.

[2] The character as homilies whose first reception was an oral context is stressed by van Dam, *Becoming Christian*, 106.

[3] Beside commentaries and homilies, Origen wrote also scholia, cf. Markschies, "Origenes und die Kommentierung," 76–78. For *Gen.* 1 nothing is left of the scholia, cf. Metzler, "Einleitung," 8–13; Markschies, "Scholien"; cf. Scherbenske, "Scholia," 192.

[4] Origen, *Homilies in Genesis* 1:1–17 (GCS Origenes 6, 1.4–35.8 Habermehl) comprises Gen. 1:1–30.

[5] Origen, *Commentary on Genesis frg.* D7 Metzler (D7 is taken from the *Philocaly*, Metzler adds three texts as "Nebenüberlieferung" and one text as "Sekundärüberlieferung"), see for this fragment below p. 43–45.

[6] Cf. Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 374–393.

[7] Hippolytus, *Fragments on Genesis* (GCS Hippolytus 1/2, 51.1–52.3 Achelis). The fragments on Genesis are presumably part of a larger work on the Pentateuch, as the Arabic fragments demonstrate.

It is unclear how Basil got the idea to preach on *Gen.* 1. Neither the letters nor the funerary speech of Gregory of Nazianzus reveal the external circumstances of this work. Gregory admires the *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* and adds that he felt like God the creator himself and understood everything in the creation when he read the work aloud, but this is of no help for the date or the place of the preaching.[8] The suggestion of Bernardi (June 12–16, 378)[9] may be questioned.[10] Since the chronology of Basil's life and the exact date of his death are uncertain, 377 or even 376 could be considered. Attempts to contextualize the work in the 360s, for example, as a reaction to Julian's *Against the Galilees*, are unconvincing.[11] More important than an exact date is the question of why Basil started his project in the manner he did. Why did he preach on *Gen.* 1? Why did he insert lengthy passages on cosmological questions into his homilies?

My hypothesis is that Basil entered an ongoing discourse about *Gen.* 1, a common tradition that regarded *Gen.* 1 as a mainly cosmological text whose meaning should be elaborated in a scientific manner. It is not Origen who is the main target of Basil's project, but his contemporaries' common understanding of *Gen.* 1, as it can be found in several commentaries of the middle of the fourth century. First, we will deal with what we know about the exegetical approaches to *Gen.* 1 in the middle of the fourth century; then, we will try to understand Basil's specific contribution.

a) New Approaches to *Gen.* 1 in the Fourth Century before Basil

Basil's nine *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* are an incomplete work. At the end of the ninth homily, Basil announces that he will discuss further topics in the future.[12] We will deal with the two homilies preserved in the manuscript tradition and ascribed there to Basil or Gregory of Nyssa later (in ch. 6). For the moment, it might be stressed that it is unclear which portions of *Gen.* 1 and 2 (maybe even further parts of *Gen.*) Basil originally wanted to cover through his project. Therefore, for contextualizing his work, we should not focus upon the genre "Hexa-

[8] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Sermon* 43.67 (SC 384, 272.1–5 Bernardi).

[9] Bernardi, "Date," 168–169; Bernardi, "Predication," 42–47, followed by Amand de Mendieta, "Genre littéraire," 366–367.

[10] Naldini, "Introduzione," xvi–xvii, proposes 377 (followed by Moreschini, "Introduzione," 81). Fedwick, Chronology, 18n99 doubts even that the homilies were preached in one week. For the date of the death of Basil see Maraval, "Date" (proposal: Sept. 377); Pouchet, "Date" (Sept. 378, accepted by Maraval, "Retour sur quelques dates," 153); Rousseau, *Basil*, 363.

[11] This is the main hypothesis of Garrido García, *Las homilias*, 177–207 who, however, is not able to show conclusively that passages of Basil's work are related specifically to fragments of Julian's *Against the Galilees*.

[12] Basil, *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* 9.6 (GCS NF 2, 161.8–10 Amand de Mendieta and Rudberg).

emeron" or describe Basil as the inventor of this genre. Instead, we should contextualize Basil's homilies into the exegetical tradition that dealt with *Gen.* 1.

In the fourth century, there is a surprisingly broad exegetical tradition concerned with Genesis before Basil started his project. We have evidence of at least six commentaries that also covered *Gen.* 1:

- Eusebius of Emesa: Beside the Greek fragments, the Armenian version is extant.[13]
- Ephraem of Edessa: A Syriac paraphrase of Ephraem's *Commentary on Genesis* is transmitted. The Greek fragments that cover only *Gen.* 2:7–6:13 cannot be parallelized to the Syriac version (either they belong to other homiletic works of Ephraem or the Syriac was intensively reworked).
- Serapion of Thmuis: Three fragments are listed by Devreesse (see below).[14]
- Acacius of Caesarea wrote a work (presumably named περὶ συμμικτῶν ζητημάτων)[15] on the Octateuch; some fragments on *Gen.* 1 have been preserved.[16]
- Apollinaris of Laodicea: Only three very short fragments that could stem from exegetical works on the Pentateuch are preserved.[17]
- Diodore of Tarsus wrote a *Commentary on the Octateuch*, from which nine fragments on *Gen.* 1 are transmitted.[18] It is not clear when Diodore wrote this work, so it is not impossible that Basil inherited some of his thoughts from Diodore.

The *Commentary on Genesis* by Didymus the Blind could have been written a little bit after Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*, or even before them.[19] We will come back to this question later in the context of Basil's so-called Origenism.

With the exception of the Armenian version of Eusebius of Emesa, the Syriac paraphrase of Ephraem's commentary and the papyrus of Toura for Didymus, the transmission of these fragments depends upon the catenae. Decades of research guided the leading expert, Françoise Petit, to the result that we have two different works, one of which is visible in the *Collectio Coisliniana*, where fragments of

[13] Cf. Petit, van Rompay, and Weitenberg, "Introduction," xxix–xxxi. For *Gen.* 1 we have two fragments in Greek on *Gen.* 1:1 and *Gen.* 1:4 (Traditio Exegetica Graeca 15, 194–196 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg) and a continuous text in Armenian (Traditio Exegetica Graeca 15, 26–44 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg) to which further texts from the epitome of Procopius (Traditio Exegetica Graeca 15, 260–266 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg) and Syriac fragments in Išo'dad of Merv (Traditio Exegetica Graeca 15, 372–376 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg) can be added.

[14] Devresse, Commentateurs, 104.

[15] For the title see Devresse, *Commentateurs*, 118, line 4 and p. 105; the title is mentioned also by Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 98 (48.3–4 Bernoulli); *Letter* 119.6 (CSEL 55, 452.20–22 Hilberg).

[16] Devresse, *Commentateurs*, 106–111.

[17] Devresse, *Commentateurs*, 129–130.

[18] Edited (primarily on the basis of two manuscripts, i. e., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, gr. 128 and 129) by Deconinck, Essai, 91–97, cf. Deconinck, Essai, 76–77.

[19] For the transmission of this text, see Nautin, "Introduction," 11–19.

Antiochene exegetes are grouped around fragments of Theodoret's *Questions on Genesis* (therefore, it is not really a catena, but rather a collection).[20] The other is a real catena assembled by an individual, anonymous author, presumably in the second half of the fifth century. The most important witnesses of this catenistic work are the so-called *Catena in Genesim*,[21] and the catenae manuscripts (the so-called type III catenae) which add fragments of the so-called *Catena in Genesim* to a collection of fragments that is close to the *Collecto Coisliniana*.[22] Further texts are contained in an epitome that tried to produce a *Commentary on Genesis*[23] out from a presumably vast but now lost catenistic work, first edited on the basis of later manuscripts by Angelo Mai and ascribed to an otherwise unknown Procopius in the manuscripts.[24]

This complex situation of the transmission of fragments of commentaries on Genesis from the fourth century is important because the ascriptions of the fragments are dependent upon the reliability of the names given in these texts. In general, the *Catena in Genesim* seems to be quite reliable as we can see from those authors whose works are known independently (such as Basil or to a certain extent, John Chrysostom). Mistakes occur, however, as can be seen from those fragments where different names are given in the manuscripts.

Not all fragments derive from exegetical works on Genesis (e. g., Athanasius is quoted, but from works like his *Orations against the Arians* or *Against the Pagans*). Since the titles of the works are regularly omitted, sometimes it is unclear whether the origin is an exegetical work on *Gen.* 1. For instance, a fragment concerning the question of whether or not the angels are ἄναρχοι – and thus are not creatures – is ascribed to Amphilochius in the manuscript L (St. Petersburg, Public Library gr. 124). A short sentence of this text is provided also in the manuscript M (Moscow GIM Vladimir 28 [Sinod. Gr. 385]) as an anonymous text.

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[20] Cf. Petit, "Introduction: La Collectio Coisliniana et la tradition caténique," xix.

[21] For *Gen.* 1 the Sinaitic branch of the catena is absent. For the edition of the catena (though enriched by fragments that derive from a collection similar to the *Collectio Coisliniana*), based upon the Moscow manuscript (to which two further codices of Leningrad/St. Petersburg and Basel can be compared), cf. Petit, Chaîne sur la Genèse, 3–128 (for *Gen.* 1).

[22] For the state of research cf. Ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, 19–22.

[23] For Procopius' use of his sources cf. Metzler, "Einleitung" [GCS NF 22], lxxxix–cxxiii. The important manuscript München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Cod.graec. 358, is digitalized (https://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/0010/bsb00109048/images/index.html?id=00109048&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=6; last accessed April 4, 2020).

[24] The identification of the Procopius to whom this epitome is attributed in the manuscript tradition with Procopius of Gaza cannot be maintained (as shown by a 2022 conference in Leuven organized by Dimitrios Zaganas), which means that not even its exact date is certain (perhaps later sixth century or seventh century?). For the method of this work, see Ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, 22–25. Metzler, "Einleitung" [GCS NF 23], xxvi–xxvii, had already stated that the *Catena in Genesim* cannot be the source of Procopius' epitome. The question of whether Procopius of Gaza could be the author of a former state, the so-called Urkatene, is now obsolete.

The first sentence of this text is transmitted also in at least two manuscripts of book I of the *Sacra Parallela*, where it is ascribed to a work of Amphilochius on *Prov.* 8:22.[25] Procopius uses the beginning of this text in his general introduction (in a passage that deals with the eternity of the universe); in the manuscript L, the text is used for the explanation of *Gen.* 1:2, whereas it is linked to *Gen.* 1:1 in M. The text is somehow connected to Amphilochius, but it is unclear whether Amphilochius ever wrote something on *Gen.* 1.[26]

A similar uncertainty should be taken into account in the case of Serapion. Only the manuscript M (Moscow GIM Library gr. 124) of the *Catena in Genesim* contains three fragments ascribed to Serapion. The first one identifies the ἀρχή of *Gen.* 1:1 with the λόγος of *John* 1:1.[27] The second connects the resemblance of man with God according to *Gen.* 1:26 to the inner man who is incorporeal, invisible, incorruptible, and immortal, which humans receive only from God.[28] The third fragment explains *Gen.* 3:15.[29] For the second fragment, the title is given: ἐκ τῆς ἑξαημέρου. This title does not reveal whether the work was a commentary or a homily (or a series of homilies). Unfortunately, the ascription of various fragments in the *Catena in Genesim* to Serapion proved to be wrong because they derive from Severian of Gabbalah. This is, however, the case with fragments concerning *Gen.* 3:6–7 and subsequent verses.[30] That is, it does not apply to the two fragments on *Gen.* 1. The third fragment in manuscript M is not contained in Severian's six *Homiliae de creatione mundi*, so it can be assumed that also the first two fragments do not belong to Severian, especially because for *Gen.* 1–2, quite a lot of fragments are correctly attributed to Severian. Due to the small size of the fragments, however, we should be prudent in sketching the character of Serapion's exegesis of *Gen.* 1.

Despite these caveats, the majority of the fragments of the *Collectio Coisliniana* and the *Catena in Genesim* can be very reliably ascribed to a specific author. With Ephraem, Eusebius of Emesa, Acacius, Apollinaris and Diodore we have a considerably high number of exegetical works on *Gen.* 1 in the middle of the fourth century. In general, they belong to a tradition that later on would be qualified as Antiochene. This is even the case for Acacius, who was the successor of Eusebius as bishop of Caesarea.

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[25] As such edited by Datema: *Amphilochius*, *frg.* 4 (CChr.SG 3, 232.1–4 Datema).

[26] Whether Procopius, *Commentary on Genesis*, introductio (GCS NF 22, 9.234–240 Metzler) is right in attributing a further fragment to Amphilochius (not included in Datema's edition) is doubtful. The fragment consists mainly of two biblical quotations, namely *Ps.* 148:1, 2, 5 and *Col.* 1:16.

[27] *Catena in Genesim* 8 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 7.1–7 Petit).

[28] *Catena in Genesim* 145 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 111.1–36 Petit).

[29] *Catena in Genesim* 400 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 264.1–4 Petit).

[30] This is the case from *Catena in Genesim* 341 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 231.1–12 Petit) onward.

We characterize these five exegetical approaches shortly before we place Basil's exegesis in this field.

Eusebius of Emesa's exegesis is transmitted in Greek fragments and in an Armenian version that seems quite reliable.[31] Three aspects are important:

1) Eusebius directs special attention to the differences between the Hebrew and the Greek. Already in his introduction, he criticizes Aquila who translated "by the same words,"[32] meaning he tried to translate faithfully in the sense that he rendered a Hebrew word always with the same Greek word.[33]
2) Eusebius understands *Gen.* 1 as Moses' description of the creation of the visible things. This is clear from his interpretation of *Gen.* 1:2. He introduces an interlocutor who questions where the creation of darkness and abyss is told.[34] His answer is that darkness has no substance, but is rather a shadow of heaven and earth, while the abyss is included in heaven and earth as the extremes of the visible world.[35] The fact that Moses only described the creation of the visible world is justified by the fact that he intended to prevent his audience from following the Egyptians who could not imagine a true God but venerated visible things instead.[36] A speculation about whether the light of *Gen.* 1:3 is present in the realm above and over the firmament is rejected.[37] The creation of the angels is passed over in silence for the same reason: it would be too challenging for the audience to comprehend.[38]
3) Eusebius presents different interpretations of verses of *Gen.* 1 on several occasions. Sometimes he combines a specific exegesis with references to Greek philosophers.[39] His own exegetical approach reads *Gen.* 1 as a report about the creation of the visible things that includes the invisible level as well.[40]

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[31] Cf. Ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, 19–26.

[32] Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentary on Genesis* 1b (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 22.9–22 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg). For Eusebius' use of alternative readings of the Greek Old Testament cf. Ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, 100–112.

[33] For Eusebius' limited knowledge of Hebrew and his dependence upon the Septuagint text cf. Ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, 47–64.

[34] Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentary on Genesis* 4a (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 28.20–21 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg).

[35] Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentary on Genesis* 4b (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 28.23–30.6 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg). Cf. the Greek *frg.* 2 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 260.1–4 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg).

[36] Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentary on Genesis* 4d (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 30.14–25 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg).

[37] Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentary on Genesis* 6c (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 34.19–25 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg).

[38] Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentary on Genesis* 4e (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 32.4–8 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg).

[39] Eusebius of Emesa, *Commentary on Genesis* 2a; 6b (Traditio exegetica Graeca 15, 26.16; 34.16 Petit/van Rompay/Weitenberg).

[40] In this sense, Eusebius as the earliest "Antiochene" exegete shows clearly that "Antiochene" exegesis does not exclude an edifying function of Scripture; see below in ch. 4 of this book. Ter

Acacius' work was not a continuous commentary on *Gen.* 1 but seems to have dealt with the beginning of *Gen.* 1 intensively.[41] The work presumably belongs to the genre of *erotapokriseis* or *questions and answers*. The first fragment begins with the question of why (διὰ τί) Moses starts with a report of the creation. It answers that this strengthens the authority of God because it is not just a random legislator or the lord of one people, but really the creator of the universe who wanted to see his laws respected.[42] A similar question introduced by another διὰ τί is integrated into the text of fragment 5,[43] and a rhetorical question (introduced by Μή ποτε) occurs in fragment 7.[44] More often, however, Acacius starts his exegesis with a statement of what should be considered or observed.[45] In the fragments the name Origen appears twice, but at least for the second passage, the name seems to be incorrect because it is not Origen's opinion that is reported.[46] Yet the mistake could have happened because Acacius took a critical view of Origen (as is the case in the first passage). His exegetical method is a scientific approach that uses philological techniques that become clear from the following three aspects:

First, Acacius pays attention to the exact wording of the text and seeks to elucidate the text by a precise rendering of the meaning of the words. For this purpose, he uses similar biblical verses from other biblical books and takes into account the fact that a word has different meanings also in Scripture. Thus, he deals with the several meanings of "ἀρχή,"[47] with the past tense of "ἦν,"[48] with the meaning of "στερέωμα" (also used for the earth),[49] and with the positive

Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, 93–95, points out that pagan education and rhetoric, the polemical rejection of Marcionite cosmology, the interest to establish a sound basis for theology (also against heresies), and the so-called Syrian connection are the most important roots of Antiochene exegesis (while a quasi-materialist worldview or Jewish exegesis did not play a decisive role).

[41] The fragments collected by Devreesse are transmitted with one exception via the *Collectio Coisliniana*: *frg.* 1 Devreesse (p. 106) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 4; *frg.* 2 Devreesse (pp. 106–107) and *frg.* 3 Devreesse (pp. 107–108) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 10; *frg.* 4 Devreesse (pp. 108–109) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 19; *frg.* 5 Devreesse (pp. 109–110) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 25; *frg.* 6 Devreesse (p. 110) = *Catena in Genesim* 51; *frg.* 7 Devreesse (pp. 110–111) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 39.

[42] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 1 (106.1–5 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 4 (4.2–8 Petit).

[43] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 5 (108.14 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 19 (19.19 Petit).

[44] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 7 (110.1–2 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 39 (36.1–2 Petit, printed without question mark – i. e., read as a prohibitive).

[45] For this purpose he uses the verbal adjective, e. g., ἀκουστέον *frg.* 2 (106.1 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 10 (9.2 Petit), δεικτέον *frg.* 2 (106.12 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 10 (9.16 Petit), πευστέον *frg.* 3 (107.3 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 10 (9.25 Petit), δεικτέον *frg.* 5 (109.7 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 25 (25.10 Petit), διαληπτέον *frg.* 7 (111.14 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 39 (37.19 Petit).

[46] Cf. Devreesse, *Octateuque*, 111n1.

[47] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 2 (106.1–107.16 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 10 (9.2–21 Petit).

[48] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 5 (109.1 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 25 (25.2 Petit).

[49] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 7 (110.4–8 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 39 (36.6–37.11 Petit).

value of the night.[50] He avoids, however, any kind of allegorical interpretation. The rejection of Origen's interpretation of "ἐν ἀρχῇ as ἐν σοφίᾳ" shows this very clearly. Acacius himself favored a Christological understanding of *Gen.* 1:1: Christ is indeed the real beginning of everything, but Christ is present in *Gen.* 1:1 because he is a beginning, not because the word "beginning" means something else, such as wisdom.[51]

Second, Acacius' aim to establish a very reasonable, nearly scientific understanding of the text is evident from the fragments. The opinion that God creates without beginning or end is rejected. Furthermore, the idea that creatures are ἄπειρα cannot be maintained. If the number of creatures is limited, one could question if God created everything simultaneously (however, then God would be inactive now), or if he created everything in a certain order, then one must admit that those things come into being only at the moment of their creation (thus the creatures of the sixth day are not real during the fifth day, etc.). This means that only God can be called ἀγένητος in its proper sense, without being generated or changed (while the creation is a limited being, created and finished by a limited operation of God during the six days of creation).[52]

This "scientific" approach can be noticed also in the clear statements of the cosmology that Acacius finds confirmed by *Gen.* 1. He assumes that the στερέωμα is not identical with the first heaven mentioned in *Gen.* 1:1. Consequently, there are two heavens: a first heaven (the realm of the angels) and a second heaven (the firmament), with each of them being linked to an earth. Therefore, we have to assume that the world is hemispheric. Over a flat earth that is floating on waters, there is a hemispheric heaven. The waters above the second heaven (the heavenly waters) are bright and clear and the firmament touches them, thus making the brightness of the higher world visible (in the same way that water covered by a coat becomes visible only if the coat is soaked through).[53]

Third, the biblical text has a pedagogical function. Not only is the creation reported for strengthening the authority of the law-giving God, but also the details of Scripture educate the reader. Acacius illustrates this by the fact that God perfected the universe only step by step, having started with an incomplete situation. He did so in order to cause admiration (θαῦμα) of his own activity and of himself. Only the possibility to compare the perfect with the imperfect – better things with less good things – makes it possible to admire God.[54] As we will

[50] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 5 (109.6–14 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 25 (25.8–19 Petit).
[51] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 2 (106.7–11 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 10 (9.10–15 Petit).
[52] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 3 (107.1–108.21 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 10 (9.21–10.49 Petit).
[53] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 7 (110.1–16 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 39 (36.2–37.22 Petit).
[54] Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 4 (108.14–109.22 Devreesse) = *Collectio Coisliniana* 19 (19.18–31 Petit), cf. Acacius of Caesarea, *frg.* 6 (109.2–3 Devreesse) = *Catena in Genesim* 51 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 34.1–2 Petit).

see, all three aspects are very important for Basil too: exact consideration of the meaning of the words of Scripture (not allegorizing them), a scientific approach, and the observation of the pedagogical function of the text that leads to θαῦμα.

Because of the brevity of the three short texts attributed to Apollinaris, it is difficult to determine the character of his exegesis. The first fragment interprets the depth of *Gen.* 1:2 as a real depth of waters.[55] This may derive from a larger context in which an allegorical reading of the abyss (as evil powers) is rejected. The second fragment explains *Gen.* 1:14. Once created, the sun and moon take over the role that light and darkness (as mentioned in *Gen.* 1:2–3) had played before.[56] This seems to be an explanation that justifies why day and night could already be distinguished even at the moment when the sun and moon did not yet exist. This is consistent with the first fragment in so far as this presupposes a bodily understanding of light and darkness in *Gen.* 1:2–3 (which again excludes an allegorical interpretation). These two fragments agree in their attempt to avoid a spiritual or allegorical meaning of *Gen.* 1. The third fragment rejects astrology by dismissing two possible explanations of the words εἰς τὰ σημεῖα. The first interpretation understands σημεῖα as miracles or exceptional things done by God in the future. The background of this is not very clear. Presumably it presupposes again an allegorical reading of the creation of the sun and moon (maybe as special revelations). The second interpretation understands it as a clear reference to astrology, which is rejected by Apollinaris based on *Is.* 47:13. This was probably the reason why the catenist selected this text.[57] Even if we cannot pinpoint Apollinaris' interpretation of *Gen.* 1, the extant fragments show that he follows the same line as Eusebius of Emesa or Acacius. An allegorical reading is rejected; everything that is mentioned in *Gen.* 1 is interpreted literally and as descriptions of cosmological facts.

It can be doubted whether Basil knew of Ephraem's exegesis. Ephraem wrote his works in Syriac.[58] Whether Basil had any (indirect?) knowledge of this exegetical approach is uncertain. It may be useful, however, to keep in mind that Ephraem belongs to the tradition that rejected an allegorical interpretation of *Gen.* 1 (he agrees with Eusebius and Acacius that Moses reported only the

[55] Apollinaris, *frg.* 1 (129.1–2 Devreesse) = *Catena in Genesim* 25 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 20.1–2 Petit).

[56] Apollinaris, *frg.* 2 (129.1–4 Devreesse) = *Catena in Genesim* 83 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 52.1–6 Petit). The following passage quoted by Devreesse is in fact Basil, *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* 6.2 (GCS NF 2, 91.1–3 Amand de Mendieta/Rudberg), cf. Petit ad locum (p. 52).

[57] Apollinaris, *frg.* 3 (129.8–130.13 Devreesse) = *Catena in Genesim* 91 (Traditio exegetica Graeca 1, 57.1–7 Petit).

[58] The importance of Ephraem's commentary on *Gen.* 1 for later Syriac interpretations, e. g., by Theodore of Mopsuestia, deserves further research. The anonymous text on Genesis edited by Levene, *The Early Syrian Fathers*, is younger than Theodore (cf. Anonymous, *Exposition of Genesis*, introductio [fol. ܐ, recto, p. 68, lin. 4 Levene]) and can be left aside here. Basil is mentioned once: Anonymous, *Exposition of Genesis*, ch. 5 (fol. ܐ, verso, p. 55, lin. 25 Levene).

creation of the visible things) and developed a cosmology based upon *Gen.* 1.[59] Ephraem seems already to react to other interpreters (such as Eusebius of Emesa or Acacius, perhaps also Apollinaris) because he rejects not only allegories, but also some physical explanations. From his perspective, for example, the darkness of *Gen.* 1:2 is a shadow, but not cast by heaven (as Eusebius of Emesa had assumed). Ephraem thinks that heaven is full of light. Otherwise, he adds, between the highest heaven and the second heaven (the firmament) (where the angels are) there must have been absolute darkness, but this does not fit with what Scripture says for the realm of the angels (in *Ex.* 12:22; *Acts* 7:55; 9:3, etc.). This leads Ephraem to the idea that at the very beginning of the first night God created clouds that caused the darkness above the water.[60] The abyss is simply water, as Apollinaris had said.[61]

The spirit above this water, however, is not the Holy Spirit, because its operation as a heat was not effective; the waters put forward the sea animals only in the fifth day of creation. Therefore, the idea that the verse proves that the Holy Spirit participated in the work of creation is unconvincing.[62] The πνεῦμα is rather air put in motion – that is, wind.[63] *Gen.* 1:1–2 told the creation only of five basic elements: heaven, earth, the abyss, waters (accompanied by the clouds), and air (meaning moving air or wind). Additionally, we have to assume that together with earth also fire was created, though this was not mentioned by Moses. Nature, however, proves that fire (or warming energy) is always linked with earth.[64] This seems to presuppose a modified concept of the elements. Ephraem seems to assume that God created the heaven (a kind of ether) and the classical four elements earth, water, air, and fire first (as told in *Gen.* 1:1–2). God did not start creating further things out of the five basic substances until the time when he gave commands.[65] The first thing created in this manner was the light whose creation is reported in *Gen.* 1:3. The first day consisted of the first night, whose darkness was caused by the clouds that arose with the waters of the abyss, and the light of day (Ephraem does not explicitly say from which element – perhaps fire – this light is created).[66] On the second day, the firmament was cre-

[59] Cf. Ephraem, *On Genesis* 1.1 (CSCO 152, 8.18–27 Tonneau); 1.3 (CSCO 152, 9.9–13 Tonneau).

[60] Cf. Ephraem, *On Genesis* 1.4–5 (CSCO 152, 10.1–12 Tonneau). Cf. Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca*, 68.

[61] Cf. Ephraem, *On Genesis* 1.4 (CSCO 152, 9.24 Tonneau).

[62] Cf. Ephraem, *On Genesis* 1.7 (CSCO 152, 11.21–26 Tonneau).

[63] Cf. Ephraem, *On Genesis* 1.7 (CSCO 152, 11.26–12.6 Tonneau). Cf. El-Khoury, *Interpretation der Welt*, 51. Kronholm, *Motifs*, 43–44, assumes that this exegesis is directed against Marcionite views, but does not consider Eusebius of Emesa's explanation.

[64] Cf. Ephraem, *On Genesis* 1.15 (CSCO 152, 16.16–26 Tonneau). Cf. El-Khoury, *Interpretation der Welt*, 50 (incorrect numbering of the five elements in Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca*, 64).

[65] Cf. Kronholm, *Motifs*, 37–39.

[66] Cf. Ephraem, *On Genesis* 1.5 (CSCO 152, 10.22–31 Tonneau).

Indices

I. Biblical References

Genesis
1–2
1–3
1
1:1
1:1–30
1:1–27
1:1–10
1:1–8
1:1–5
1:1–2
1:2
1:2–3
1:3
1:4
1:5
1:6–8
1:6–7
1:6
1:7
1:8
1:9–10
2
1:9
1:10
1:11–27
1:11
1:12–13
1:12
1:14
1:14–19
1:15
1:16
1:17–19
1:20–26
1:20
1:21
1:22–23
1:22
1:24
1:25
1:26–2.3
1:26–28
1:26–27
1:26
1:27–28
1:27
1:28–30
1:28
1:29–30
5, 67, 168–169
96, 99, 109
VII–VIII, 1–16, 22, 24, 49, 51–52, 57, 88–89, 91, 93, 98–100, 101–102, 107, 109, 111–112, 114–115, 117–119, 129–130, 149–151, 154, 159, 164–165, 168–169, 190, 198–199
3, 5, 8, 12, 16–17, 28, 30, 102, 108, 131, 135, 138, 141, 143
1
102
107
111
49, 52
10–11, 145
5–6, 9–12, 33–34, 37–39, 64, 102, 141–142, 144, 146, 149
9, 150
6, 10, 12, 51, 74, 92, 102, 107, 142–143, 148–151
3, 102
102, 106
96–97
40, 97, 143
52, 103, 105–106, 143
103, 106, 143
103
105
44, 89–90, 103–106, 111, 115
103, 105, 115
107
44, 48, 103–107, 116–117, 119
24, 103
106
1, 9, 40–41, 43, 45, 47, 64, 74, 100, 144, 149–150, 198
89, 91–92
24, 104–105
104, 144
24, 104
24
24, 104–106
24, 104, 106, 120
24, 104
24
18, 23–24, 47–48, 104–107
24, 104
169
93–95
166
5, 13, 21, 51–57, 67, 93–94, 104, 155–158, 161–167, 169
169
57, 104, 156–157, 165–166, 169
159
13, 24, 157–159, 166, 169
158, 169

1:30 105, 158, 169
1:31 27, 158–159
2 2, 169–170
2:1 158–159
2:2a 158, 169
2:2b–3 158, 169
2:4–5 52
2:4 91
2:4a–b 158
2:4a/b-2:6 169
2:5–6 158
2:7 158–159, 166–170
2:7–6:13 3
2:23 67
3 66
3:6–7 5
3:15–19 95
3:15 5
3:21 67–68, 96
6:6 53
7–9 115
25:27 121

Exodus
2:23–24 184
3 183
12:22 10
33:20 86

Leviticus
17:11 23

Numbers
12 112
12:8 108

Deuteronomy
28:23 40

Joshua
10:12 13

2 Kingdoms
8 83
15:31 82

4 Kingdoms
4:38–41 101

1 Chronicles
4:23 54

Psalms VII,15
1:6 53
2:7 171
7:7 83
7:10 83
7:13 83
7:16 83
8:5–10 MT 53
14 82
15 72
15:1b 73
15:3 73
15:5 74
15:8–11 72
24 82
28 80
28–29 76
28:1 78–79
28:5 79, 88
28:6 77
28:7 79
28:10 79
29 77
32:10 82
32:10 88
33 80, 86–87
33:7 86
33:8 118
33:16 86
33:17 86
33:21 79
40 86
44 77, 80, 87
44:2 80
44:3 77–78
44:4 78
45 77, 80, 87
45:6 87
48:5 82
48:7 82
48:11 82
48:12 82
48:13–14 165
48:13 165
59 82

59:11 84
61:2 84
61:10 84
73:16 73–74
73:17 74
75:3 74
75:6 74
81:6 84–85
85:11 MT 53
85:12 MT 53
103:15 117
103:24 LXX 19
114:9 84
115:1–2 84
115:2 84
115:6 84
118:103 110
138:6 160
140:7 79

Job
36:27a 40

Ecclesiastes
1:7 115
2:14 168

Song of Songs 95

Proverbs
8:22 5
13:9 147
15:3 122
20:6 158, 167
22:28 122

Isaiah
1–16 185
1:13–14 178–180
1:13 178
1.32 178
5 118, 181
5:1–7 177
5:1–6 181
5:1–2 118, 177, 180–181
5:6 181
5:8–10 177
5:8 122
5:11–12 177–178, 180
6 181, 184
6:1–5 177, 181–182
6:1 181–184
6:2a 182
6:3 182
6:6–8 177, 181–182, 184
6:6 181–183
6:7 183
6:9–10 182
10:1–23 177
10:24–11:9 177, 181–182
11:10 177
40 119
40:6 116
40:22 115, 148
44:27 40
47:13 9
53:2–3 77

Jeremiah
5:22 115

Daniel
3:8–25 79

Hosea
13:4 147

Amos
8:11 177, 179

Wisdom of Solomon
9:15 96
11:20c 40

Matthew 173
1:9 43
1:18–2:11 86
2:1–11 43
3:17 77
7:15 121
10:16 185
13 117
17:5 77
24:20 185
28:18 171–172
28:19–20 171, 176

28:19 172, 174–175
28:20 172

Mark
4 117
4:26–28 117

Luke 172
2:13 147
9 173
9:59–62 173
11:13 125
14 173
14:16–24 172–173
14:27 173

John 15
1:1 5, 136
1:9 150
1:18 66
3 174
3:3 173–174
3:5 174
10:30 54, 57
14:9 54, 57
14:10 162
15 117–118
15:1–6 177

Acts
2:25–28 72
3:21 74
7:42 147
7:55 10
9:3 10
28:26–27 182

Romans
1:16 98
1:20 111
5:8–10 174
6 174
6:3–10 173–175
6:3 172, 174
6:4 174
6:5–6 174
6:7 174
6:9–10 174
6:12–13 174
6:23 174
8:38 147

1 Corinthians
1:21 126
1:24 136–137
2:16 69
11:7 13
12:28 118
15 193–195
15:28 195
15:42–44 86, 96
15:45–47 188
15:51 126
15:53 68

2 Corinthians
4:16 180
6:1 172
12:2 66
12:3 66
12:10 180

Ephesians
1:21 147
4:21–24 87
6:1 128
6:4 128

Galatians
2 174

Colossians
1:12 147
1:15 54, 56, 94, 136, 146
1:16 147
3:1 24, 168

Philippians
2:15 150
3:20 24

1 Thessalonians
4:16 147
5:23 69

Hebrews
1:3 54
1:14 56, 147
4:12 78

1 Peter
3:15 171
3:22 147

1 John
1:7 172

Judas
9 147

Apocalypse
21:6 136

II. Ancient Sources

Acacius of Caesarea

Fragments 7
frg. 1 7
frg. 2 7–8
frg. 3 7–8
frg. 4 7–8
frg. 5 7–8
frg. 6 7–8
frg. 7 7–8

Aetius phil.

Placita (Tenets)
2.29.6 50
3.10 50

Aetius theol.

Syntagmation 55

Alcinous

Didaskalikos
6 131
10 131

Ambrose

About Elia and Fasting 179
31–32 179
53–55 180

Exameron VII

Explanation of Isaiah 179

Amphilochius of Iconium

Fragments
frg. 4 5

Anaximander

Fragments
frg. 5 50

Anastasius

On the Hexaemeron
7.4 199

Anonyma

Exposition of Genesis
Introductio 9
5 9

Scholia in Basilium
30 33

Anonymous Church History (Gelasius) 156

Apollinaris of Laodicea

Apodeixis 69, 189

To Jovian 69

On Genesis (frg.)
frg. 1 9
frg. 2 9
frg. 3 9

Aristophanes of Byzance

Epitome
119–127 120
128–129 120

Aristotle

On Philosophy 32

On the Heavens 31
2.13 31, 50

History of Animals 120

Metereology
2.2–3 39

Astronomica

Zodiologium Mosquense 46

Zodiologium Napolitense
46

Athanasius

Orations Against the Arians I–III
4
II.15.1–17.1 56

Oration Against the Arians III
69
III.27.1–28.1 56

Against the Pagans
4

Tomus for the Antiochenes
62

Dokumente (AW III.1)
47.2 187
56.5 55
61.1 55
61.2 55
62.1 55
69.2–69.5 62
81.1 62
81.2 70

Pseudo-Athanasius: Questions on Scripture
185

Pseudo-Athanasius: Against the Sabellians
186
5 187
6 187
13 188

Atticus

Fragments
frg. 26 35

Augustine

Against Faustus
20.14 35
21.1 35
24.2 49

Against the So-Called Fundamental Letter
23 49

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians
179

Confessions
9.13 179

On Heresies
46.12 49

Explanations of Psalms
15
140.12 49

De Genesi ad litteram
124

The Catholic and the Manichaean Ways of Life
2.36 49

Treatises on the Gospel of John
15

Bardesanes

Book of the Laws of Several Regions
47

Basil of Caesarea

Against Eunomius
63, 132, 141, 154–156, 189
1–2 63, 140
1.10 138
1.12 132
2.2 131
2.4 139
2.22 55
2.27 138
2.28 138
3 63

Moral Homilies 158, 177–180, 186
1–2 (*On Fasting*) 178
1.1–7 179–180
1.7–11 179
1.7 180
1.8 180
1.9 180
2.3 179
2.7 179

2.8 179
3 (*On the Words "Be Attentive to Yourself"*) 76, 162–163, 180
3.2 160
3.6 163
3.8 169
3.28 162
12 (*On the Beginning of Proverbs*) 75
14 (*On the Drunkards*) 177, 179
14.6–7 177
15 (*On Faith*) 135, 136, 147
15.1 136, 147
15.2 136
15.3 136
24 (*Against the Sabellians, Arius etc.*) 186–188
24.1 55

Homilies on the Hexaemeron VII–VIII, 1–3, 14–15, 27, 31, 61, 66, 72, 89, 99–100, 141, 144, 146, 153–154, 156–157, 165, 167, 170, 190, 197–199
1 102, 108, 114, 146–147
1–4 107, 114, 129
1.1 102, 112–113
1.2 16–17, 27–28, 102, 131, 136–138
1.3 29–30
1.5 146
1.7 16–17, 30, 102, 143
1.8 31, 102, 138–139
1.10 17, 32
1.11 17, 32
2–4 108
2 102, 114
2.1 102, 109
2.2 33–35, 38
2.3 25
2.4 49–50, 97, 102, 142
2.5 97, 142, 146–148, 150–151
2.6 102
2.7 102, 148
2.8 102
3 103, 111
3.1 110
3.2 103, 143–144
3.4 103, 105–106, 144
3.5 40
3.6 40
3.7 39
3.8 40, 103
3.9 98
3.10 111
4 103, 114–115, 120, 124
4.1 111, 115
4.2 103, 105, 111
4.3 105, 115
4.5 44, 103, 105
5–9 107, 114
5 102–103, 108, 115, 119–120, 124, 129–130, 177
5.1 103
5.2 44, 103, 116
5.3 116
5.5 103, 116, 117
5.6 103, 106, 117–118, 180–181
5.7 117–119
5.9 106
6 103, 108, 120, 124, 130
6.1 108–109
6.2 9, 103–104, 149–150
6.4 41, 104
6.5 41–42, 104
6.6 42
6.7–8 41
6.7 42–43
6.8 104
6.9 104
7 23–24, 102, 104, 108, 120–121, 124
7–9 114, 120, 129–130
7.1–2 120
7.1 104
7.2 24
7.3–6 120
7.3 121
7.4 23, 122
7.5 23, 122–123

7.6 17, 24, 104, 120, 123–124
8 23–24, 102, 104, 108, 120, 124, 126
8.1–2 124
8.1 19, 47–49, 104
8.2–4 124
8.2 23–24, 104
8.4–6 124
8.4 125
8.5 125
8.6 125–126
8.7 104, 126
8.7–8 124
8.8 17, 104, 107, 124
9 23–24, 57, 104, 108, 120, 127, 130, 151, 157, 160, 162, 169
9.1 18, 50, 98, 101, 104
9.2–3 127
9.2 19, 24, 101, 107, 151, 168
9.3–4 127
9.3 18–20, 22, 104, 127–128
9.4 19–22, 128–129
9.5 19, 21, 127, 163
9.6 2, 22, 51, 54, 57, 104, 127, 153, 160, 162, 166

Homilies on Psalms

VIII, 71, 75–77, 82, 84–85, 88, 99, 187
1 76, 85, 138
1.1 85
1.3 138
7 76, 83
7.2 83
7.3–4 83
7.6 83
7.7 83
7.8 83
14a 76
14b 76
28 76, 82
28.1 80
28.2 78–79
28.3 87
28.4 88
28.5 77, 79
28.6 80
28.8 79
29 76, 81
29.1 77, 81
30–31 76
32–33 76
32 76, 81
32.2 81
32.3 81
32.4 81–82
32.4–6 81
32.6 82
32.5 81
32.8 88
33 76, 81
33.11 86
33.13 79
44 76, 81
44.1 77
44.2 77, 86–87
44.3 80
44.4 78
44.4–5 78
44.5 78
44.9 80
45 76, 82
45.4 87
48 76, 81–82, 162, 164, 166
48.3 82
48.6 82
48.7 82
48.8 163, 167
59 76, 83
59.2 84
61 76, 83–84
61.2 84
61.3 84
61.4 84
114 76, 83–84
115 76, 83–85
115.4 84–85

Letters

9 37, 63, 132
9.2 37

38 139, 186, 189
52 56, 187
99.3 11
125 63–64, 70, 155
125.3 64
189 189–190
210.3 55
214.3 34
223.5 155
244.3 11
258 70–71
258.1 71
258.2 71
258.3 70
258.4 70
361–364 70
361 63
Epistula Sebastiani 70

On the Spirit 156

On the Holy Spirit 61, 63–64, 70, 136, 145–146, 155–156, 161–162, 175
1–8 63
2.4 55
9 136–138
9.22 135, 137
9.23 137
10 63
14 75
16 137, 144, 147
16.38 137, 144, 147
18.44–45 162
29 61
29.72 37
29.73 61–62
30.77 55

(Pseudo?-)Basil, Homilies on the Creation of Humans VIII, 153–154, 159, 164–166, 169–170 176, 185
1 156–158, 159–167
2 158–159, 167–170

(Pseudo?-)Basil, On Baptism VIII, 171, 174, 176, 185
1.1.1 171–172
1.1.2 172
1.1.3 172
1.1.4 172–173
1.1.5 173
1.2.27 175
1.2.8 174
1.3.1 175
2.3 175
2.6.2 175
2.7 175

(Pseudo?-)Basil, Explanation of Isaiah VIII, 51, 176–180, 182, 184–185
praef. 6 112
1–7 185
1 185
1.20–21 181
1.29–33 178, 180
1.31–32 177–178
1.32 180
1.33 178, 180
5.139 181
5.139–147 181
5.146 181
5.146–147 181
5.154–155 177
5.154–156 177
5.154–158 177
5.154–164 178
5.158 178
5.159–164 178
6.183 183
6.184 183–184
6.185 182
6.186 183
6.187 183
7 185
14.286 184

Catenae in Genesim

Catenae in Genesim 4–5
8 5
25 9
51 7–8
83 9
91 9

145 5
341 5
400 5

Collectio Coisliniana 3–5
4 7
5 11–12
10 7–8
16 11–12
19 7–8
25 7–8
28 11–12
32 11–12
39 7–8
43bis 11–12
48 44
52bis 11, 13
55 11, 13
57 11, 13
70 11, 13
73 163
121 67–68

Cicero

On the Nature of the Gods 168
1 29

Cleomedes

The Heavens
I.7.94 50

Cyril of Alexandria

Against Julian
2.16–17 33

Commentary on Matthew (frg.)
frg. 269 185

Treasury of the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity 56

Democritus

Fragments
frg. 94 50

Didymus

Commentary on Genesis 3, 88, 95, 98
I.9 89–90
I.14–19 91–93
I.26–28 93–95
III.7–8 95
III.13 95
III.16–19 95
III.21 95–96

Diodore

Fragments 3
frg. 1 11–12
frg. 2 11–12
frg. 3 11–12
frg. 4 11–12
frg. 5 11–12
frg. 6 11, 13
frg. 7 11, 13
frg. 8 11, 13
frg. 9 11, 13

Κατὰ εἱμαρμένης 47

Diogenes

Oinoanda Inscription
NF 127 I 29
NF 127 II 29

Dionysius of Alexandria

Against Sabellius 37

On Nature 29

Ephrem the Syrian

On Genesis 3
1.1 10
1.3 10
1.4–5 10
1.4 10
1.5 10
1.7 10
1.15 10
1.17 11
1.18 11

1.20 11
1.23 11

Epiphanius of Salamis

Ancoratus 69–71, 88–89, 95, 99, 195
tit. 66
6.5–10 66
33.4 68
54.2–4 66
55.1–2 67
63–64 66
63.1–3 68
63.6 68
63.7 68
75.7–8 69
76.1–3 69
81.4 66
87.2 68
119.1 66

Remedy against the Heresies 71
66.26.3 48
66.31.5 49
71.1.1–5.6 187
73.21.4 55
76.11.1–12.37 55

Eunomius

Apology 55, 154
11–12 55
24 56

Eusebius of Caesarea

Against Marcellus
I.4.8 65
2.2 187
2.3 187

Commentary on Isaiah 65

Commentary on Psalms 75
115 84

Demonstration of the Gospel 65

Ecclesiastical History
6 64
6.16.1–4 64
6.32.3 65

On Ecclesiastical Theology
I.17 56
2.2 56, 187
2.3 56
2.3 187
2.8 187

Life of Pamphilus 65

Preparation for the Gospel 27–28, 34, 37–38, 44–45, 59–60, 64–65, 100, 197
6 47
6.10 47
6.11.1–81 44
6.11.28 44
6.11.64 44
7 33, 59
7.19.1–8 37
7.20.3 38
7.20.4 38
7.20.5–7 38
7.20.9 37
7.20.10.1–9 64
7.21.2–3 38
14 27
14.23.1 28
14.23.2–3 28
14.23.4 28
14.24.1 28
14.24.2–4 28
14.25.3–6 29
14.26.2–13 29
14.27.8 29
14.25.10 29

Eusebius of Emesa

Commentary on Genesis 3
1b 6
2a 6
4a 6
4b 6
4d 6

4e 6
6b 6
6c 6
8a–c 13
8d 13
8e–f 13

Eustathius of Antioch

On the Belly-myther
21 65

Against the insane Arians
69

(Pseudo-)Gelasius

Anonymous Ecclesiastical History
156

Gregory Nazianzus

Letters
115 60–61
115.1–4 60

Sermons
5 185
43 60
43.67 2, 61

Gregory of Nyssa

Against Eunomius, Refutation of Eunomius' Creed
189

Against the Macedonians
190

Apology of the Hexaemeron
153, 190
3.1 162
4 110

On the Creation of Humans
153, 162, 170, 190, 192, 195, 197
praef. 1 190
praef. 1–2 153
3.1 163
8 162, 169
17 (16) 192
19.3–5 164

Catechetical Oration
26.3 195
35.3 194–195

Homilies on the Song of Songs
196

Life of Moses 196

On the Inscriptions of the Psalms
190, 196

Homilies on Ecclesiastes
190, 196

On the Soul and Resurrection
190, 195, 197

To Eustathius on the Holy Trinity
189–190

To Ablabius on Not Saying Three Gods
189

To Simplicius on the Faith
189

To the Greeks on Common Notions
189

To Peter on the Difference between Substance and Hypostasis (Basil, Ep. 38)
189–190

Treatise on 1 Cor. 15:28
195

Hippolytus

Commentary on Daniel
1

Fragments on Genesis
1

Refutation of all Heresies
4.15.3–26.2 46

Jerome

Commentary on Isaiah
182

Letters
33.4 65
51 70
119.6 3

On Illustrious Men
98 3

Treatises on Psalms
115 84

John Philoponus

On the Eternity of the Cosmos
6.14 36
13.15 32

Julian

Against the Galilees 2

Justin

Dialogue with Trypho
62.1–3 54
62.2–3 53

Manichaica

Acts of Archelaus 48–49

Marcellus of Ancyra

Fragments
frg. 38 187
frg. 58 56
frg. 66 187
frg. 95 56

Methodius

De resurrectione 59

Midrashim

Bereshit Rabbah 53–54
8.3 53
8.4 53
8.8 53
8.9 57

Nemesius

On the Nature of Humans
33, 170

Oppian

Halieutics 120

Origen

Against Celsus 64

Commentary on Genesis
1, 44, 47, 64, 100
frg. D3.3 38
frg. D3.4 38
frg. D3.5–7 38
frg. D3.9 37
frg. D5 44
frg. D6 44
frg. D7 1, 43–44
frg. D11 163
frg. D22 67–68

Commentary on Psalms
74

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans
62, 84

Commentary on the Gospel of John
62

Dialogue against the Marcionites
59–60, 63

Hexapla 65

Homilies on Genesis 1
1:1–17 1

Homilies on Isaiah
4.4 184
5.3 184
6.6 184

Homilies on Psalms 62, 72–73, 75
First Homily on Psalm 15 72–73
First Homily on Psalm 15.1 73
First Homily on Psalm 15.2 72
First Homily on Psalm 15.3 73
First Homily on Psalm 15.5 74

First Homily on Psalm 15.6 73
First Homily on Psalm 15.9 74
Second Homily on Psalm 15 72
Third Homily on Psalm 73.2 73
Third Homily on Psalm 73.3 74
Third Homily on Psalm 73.4 74
Third Homily on Psalm 73.5 74
Third Homily on Psalm 73.10 74
Homily on Psalm 75.2 74
Homily on Psalm 75.5 74

Philocaly 1, 37, 43–44, 59–62, 64–65, 72, 74, 98–100
Prologus 60–61

On First Principles 64, 68, 191–193
II.1.4 28
II.3.4 193
II.3.7 193–194
II.8.3 191
II.9.2–6 192
II.9.2 193
II.9.6 193
II.9.8 194
II.10.6 194
II.11.6 194
III.6.1 165
III.6.3 194
III.6.6 194
III.6.8–9 194
IV 72
IV.2.4 61

Pamphilus

Apology of Origen 64–65

Philo

On the Creation of the Cosmos 52
1.3.16 52
1.6.25 52
1.10.36–37 52
1.24.72–73 52
1.24.74–75 53
1.44.129–130 52
1.46.134.135 52

On Providence 37–38

Photius

Library
223 47

Plato

Timaeus 29, 99, 198–199
30a 36
31bc 32
39d–41e 48

Pseudo-Plato

Epinomis 32

Alcibiades 160

Plotinus

Enneads
II.3.1 46–47
II.3.12 47
II.9.3 148
IV.3.22 148
IV.3.9 148
V. 3.8 148
VI.8.17 30

Porphyry

Isagoge 139
3.8 140
8.3 140

Fragments
frg. 271 47
frg. 460 33

Commentary on the Timaeus (frg.) 36
47 36
51 36
58–60 32

Homeric Questions
I.11 72

On Principles and Matter 36
72 36
73–83 36

94 36
97 36

Various Questions 3, 33

Posidonius

Fragments
frg. 49 50
frg. 202 50

Proclus

Commentary on the Timaeus
II 35

Procopius

Epitome 3–5, 182

Ptolemy

Geography
7.5.12 50

Sacra Parallela
Book 1 50

Sextus Empiricus

To the Astrologers 45
29–30 46
46 46, 142
47–48 46
55–73 45
73–80 45
88–93 45
95–99 46

Simplicius

On Physics
I 28

Socrates Scholasticus

Ecclesiastical History
4.26.8 61

Sozomenus

Ecclesiastical History
6.17.2 61

Themistius

In Metaphysics XII 48

Theodoretus

Compendium of the Heretic Inventions
1.24.3 35

Ecclesiastical History
2.27.6 55
2.27.10–11 55

Questions on Genesis
4

Theon of Smyrna

Astrology
1 50
39 50

Theophilus of Alexandria

Treatise against Origen about the Vision of Isaiah
1 184
2–5 184

Titus of Bostra

Against the Manichaeans
IV.111 34

III. Names and Places

Absalom 83
Acacius of Caesarea 3, 5, 7–10, 13–15, 100
Achaz 43
Achelis, Hans 1
Adam 67, 95–96, 169
Adamantius 60
Aetius 37, 50, 55
Alexandre, Monique 53, 195
Alieva, Olga 113
Altaner, Berthold 124
Amand de Mendieta, Emmanuel (Amand, David) VII, 2, 28, 42, 46, 173
Ambrose VII, 179–180
Amphilochius of Iconium 4–5, 70
Anastasius of Sinai 199
Anaximander 5
Andresen, Carl 72
Anomeans 51, 56, 186–187
Apollinaris of Laodicea 3, 5, 9–11, 13–14, 63, 69–70, 93–94, 99, 186–189
Aquila 6, 84
Aristophanes 111, 120
Aristotle 31–32, 39, 50, 120
Armstrong, Arthur Hilary 139
Arzhanov, Yury 36
Athanasius 4, 56, 62–63, 69, 145
Athenogenes 62
Athens 14
Athos 154
Atticus 33–36, 38
Augustine 15, 48–49, 124
Ayres, Lewis 63, 139

Bardesanes 47
Bardy, Gustave 14
Basil of Ancyra 187
Basil of Caesarea VII–IX, 1–3, 6, 9, 11, 14–16, 18–25, 27–35, 37–57, 59–66, 70–72, 75–89, 96–105, 108–117, 119–122, 124–125, 127–132, 134–136, 141–151, 153–156, 159–172, 177, 180–182, 185–190, 195–199
Bassi, Dominicus 46
Bastero, Juan L. 189
Behr, John 133, 192
Benedetto, Dario 190
Berghaus, Margitta 186, 189–190
Bergjan, Silke-Petra 29, 37, 62
Berloco, di Francesco 120, 124
Bernardi, Jean 2
Berrens, Dominik 128
Berti, Enrico 32
Bethlehem 43
Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli 46
Bibliothèque Nationale de France 3
Bidez, Joseph 46
Bienert, Wolfgang A. 28
Birjukov, Dmitri 132
Blowers, Paul M. 14, 113
Bouteneff, Peter C. 114
Bracht, Katharina 1
Brennecke, Hanns Christof 62, 69–70
Brock, Sebsatian 145
Brown, Raymond E. 114
Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München 62, 71
Bumazhnov, Dmitrij 66–67

Caesarea 5, 65
Callahan, John F. 139
Cameron, Alan 197
Capone, Alessandro 70
Cappadocia 62
Carleton Paget, James N. B. 59, 73
Carneades 47
Carriker, Andrew 65
Cartwright, Sophie 69
Cassin, Matthieu 189
Cattaneo, Enrico 55, 176–177, 182, 184–185
Cavalcanti, Elena 96
Ceresa-Gastaldo, Aldo 76
Chaldeans 41
Christ/Jesus 8, 54, 56, 61–62, 64, 66, 68–69, 72–75, 77–81, 83–87, 92, 94–96, 99, 110, 113, 118, 131, 135–136, 138, 144, 146, 150, 171, 178, 181, 198
Chrysostom 4
Chusi 83
Clark, Elizabeth A. 66–67
Clement of Alexandria 64
Clement of Rome 62

Cleomedes 45
Combefis, François 153
Constantinople 190
Corrigan, Kevin 139, 196, 198
Corsini, Eugenio 192
Courtonne, Yves 30–31, 40, 45, 70, 97, 120, 129,
Crouzel, Henri 62, 75
Cumont, Franz 46
Curti, Carmelo 84
Cvetkovic, Vladimir 33
Cyril of Alexandria 185

Daley, Brian E. 198
Daniel 179–180
Daniélou, Jean 197
David 77, 83–86, 99
Dechow, Jon F. 71
Deconinck, Joseph 3
Decret, François 34
Degli Espositi, Mirko 190
Dehnhard, Hans 136, 155
DelCogliano, Mark 43, 65, 76, 84–86, 133–135, 139, 146, 156
DeMarco, David C. 30, 38, 40, 59, 97, 106, 181, 198
Democritus 28, 55
Devreesse, Robert 3, 7, 13
Didymus the Blind 3, 13, 65–66, 88–96, 98, 113–114, 196–198
Dihle, Albrecht 47
Diodore of Tarsus VII, 3, 5, 11–14, 47, 59, 100, 145, 195
Dionysius of Alexandria 28–29, 37–38, 62
Dionysius of Rome 62
Dively Lauro, Elizabeth Ann 72
Dorn, Martin 197
Dörries, Hermann 63, 155
Douglass, Scott 189
Drecoll, Volker Henning 37, 49, 62–64, 69, 81, 112, 114, 132, 145, 155, 182, 186, 189–190, 197
Ducatillon, Jeanne 173
Dünzl, Franz 196

Eden 95
Edwards, Mark 139
Egypt 12, 73, 112, 115
Egyptians 6, 12, 47, 112
Elijah 178
Elisaeus 101
El-Khoury, Nabil 10–11
Elliott, Mark W. 14
Ephraem the Syrian 3, 5, 9–12, 14, 100, 145
Epicurus 28
Epiphanius 65–71, 88–89, 95, 99, 191, 195
Esbroeck, Michel van 153–154, 164
Ethiopia 112
Eunomius VIII, 37, 55, 84, 132, 138, 154–156, 184, 189
Eusebius of Caesarea 5, 28–29, 33–35, 37–38, 43–44, 47, 55–56, 59–60, 62–65, 69, 83–84, 182, 187, 197
Eusebius of Emesa 3, 5–6, 9–10, 12–14, 44, 62, 100, 145
Eusebius of Vercelli 62
Eusinoe 155
Eustathius of Antioch 65, 69
Eustathius of Sebaste 63, 65, 70, 155
Eustathius translator 103, 107, 124
Evagrius Ponticus 196–198
Eve 67, 95–96, 169

Falkenberg, René 49
Fedwick, Paul Jonathan 2, 15, 27, 145, 154, 171, 176
Fialon, Eugène 27
Firmilian of Caesarea 62
Flacilla 190
Flashar, Hellmut 32
Fleischer, Kilian Joseph 28–29
Florence 154
Föllinger, Sabine 120, 129
Fogleman, Alex 142
Forbes, George Hay 192
Fürst, Alfons 181, 196

Gain, Benoît 71
Garnier, Julian 171, 176
Garrido-García, María Dolores 2
Gelasius 156
Genova 153
Getasa 11
Gethsemane 85
Giet, Stanislas 153–154

Girardi, Mario VII, 62, 75, 77, 79, 81–82, 84–85, 88, 98
Giulea, Dragos Andrei 63
Gleede, Benjamin 12–13, 198
Grafton, Anthony 65
Graumann, Thomas 65
Gregory of Nazianzus 2, 60–61, 184, 190
Gregory of Nyssa 2, 59–60, 69, 98, 110, 153–154, 162–164, 168–170, 186, 188–198
Gregory Thaumaturgus 62, 64
Grelier-Deneux, Hélène 189
Gribomont, Jean VII, 59, 154, 171, 174
Gronau, Karl VII, 31, 39, 50, 100, 168
Grünbeck, Elisabeth 75, 77–78, 80
Gryson, Roger 177
Guillaumin, Marie-Louise 76
Guinot, Jean-Noël 183

Hades 72, 80
Hanson, Richard Patrick Crosland 63, 75
Happ, Heinz 32
Harl, Marguerite 59, 75, 113, 136
Harnack, Adolf von 63
Hauschild, Wolf-Dieter 62, 70, 155, 186
Hegedus, Tim 42–43
Heil, Uta 56, 62
Heine, Ronald E. 43, 196
Hengstermann, Christian 181
Henke, Rainer VII, 18, 20, 120
Henne, Philippe 59, 159, 171, 177
Henry, Paul 136, 148
Hesiod 97
Hidal, Sten 10
Hildebrand, Stephen M. 85, 114, 132, 139, 154
Hippolytus 1, 46
Holl, Karl 63
Hollerich, Michael J. 65, 182
Homeans 34
Homer 44, 97
Homoiousians 63–64
Hoof, Lieve van 186
Hörner, Hadwig 154, 160–161, 163
Hübner, Reinhard M. 139–140, 186–187
Humbertclaude, Pierre 171, 176, 185

Idith 84
Innocent 71
Irenaeus of Lyon 62
Isaiah 116, 177, 183–184
Isidore of Pelusium 55
Išo'dad of Merv 3
Israel 43

Jacob 121
Janema, T. 11
Jay, Pierre 177
Jerome 3, 70, 84–85, 182, 191
Jerusalem 24, 69–71, 80, 85, 182, 189
Jews 56, 80, 82, 84
John the Baptist 172, 175
John Chrysostom 4
John of Jerusalem 69–70
John Philoponus 44
Jones, Howard 28–29
Julian Apostata 2, 11, 184
Jülicher, Adolf 185
Julius Africanus 62
Junod, Eric 59–60, 64–65
Justin 54

Kalligas, Paul 139
Karamanolis, George E. 32
Karfíková, Lenka 189, 196
Kiel, Nikolai 192–193
Kochańczyk-Bonińska, Karolina 133–134
Köckert, Charlotte VII, 1, 28–30, 32, 34, 36, 112, 120, 190
Krannich, Thorsten 47
Kronholm, Tryggve 10–11
Kudella, Mirjam 49
Kullmann, Wolfgang 120

Lampsacus 132, 155
Langerbeck, Hermannus 160–161
Layton, Richard A. 88, 94, 96, 196
Le Boulluec, Alain 177, 181, 184
Lebanon 79–80
Leemans, Johan 189
Leningrad 4
Leuven 4
Levene, Abraham 9
Levie, Jean 120

Levites 80
Leys, Roger 153
Libanius 186
Lim, Richard VII, 11, 14, 98
Lipatov-Chicherin, Nikolai A. 176–177, 181–182
Living Spirit (Manichaean) 48
Loonbeek, Raymond 176
Lössl, Josef 14
Lucian 68
Ludlow, Morwenna 195

Madrid 154
Mai, Angelo 4
Männlein-Robert, Irmgard 35
Maraval, Pierre 2, 189
Marcellus of Ankyra 55–56, 65, 187–188
Markschies, Christoph 1, 28–29, 64
Martens, Peter W. 14, 16, 59, 67, 73, 75, 77
Martzelou, G.A. 139
Maspero, Giulio 134, 189–190
Mateo-Seco, Lucas F. 189
Maximus 33, 59, 64
May, Gerhard 189
McConnell, Timothy P. 17, 146
McLynn, Neil 60
Meletius of Antioch 62, 70
Meletius of Pontus 62
Mesopotamia 62
Methodius 33–34, 59, 64–65
Metzler, Karin 1, 4–5
Michael 147
Mira Iborra, Manuel 63
Moreschini, Claudio 2, 55, 98, 139, 192
Morlet, Sébastien 65
Moscow 4, 11
Moses 5, 7, 9–11, 16–17, 49, 51, 54, 96, 107–108, 111–113, 151, 178, 183–184
Motta, Beatrice 45
Mount of Olives 71
Muehlberger, Ellen 135
Mühlenberg, Ekkehard 69, 188–189
München 4, 71

Naldini, Mario VII, 2, 31, 98, 120
Nautin, Pierre 3
Nemesius of Emesa 170
Neri, Umberto 171
Nesselrath, Heinz-Günther 186
Neugebauer, Otto 45
Niehoff, Maren 52
Nilus of Ancyra IX
Norelli, Enrico 64

Omophoros 48
Oppian 120
Origen 1–2, 7, 13, 33–34, 37–38, 43–47, 59–62, 64–75, 79, 83–85, 88–89, 99–100, 112, 133, 163, 165, 182, 184, 189–191, 193–198
Orphanos, Markos A. 14, 23

Paczkowski, Mieczysław C. 72, 75, 77, 131
Palladius 71
Pamphilus 65
Paris 3
Pasquali, Giorgio 33
Patterson, Lloyd George 33
Paul 78, 93, 126, 128, 150, 173–175, 177
Paul of Samosata 55
Paulinus of Antioch 62, 70
Pedersen, Nils Arne 49
Pelikan, Jaroslav 22
Pépin, Jean 11, 16, 32, 98
Peroli, Enrico 197
Perrone, Lorenzo 12, 71–73
Perrot, Arnaud 177, 184
Peter 72
Peter of Sebaste 153, 189
Petit, Françoise 4, 11
Petit, Pierre 236
Philo of Alexandria 52, 64, 112, 169
Photinus 187
Photius 60
Pierce, Alexander H. 100
Pierce, Madison N. 72
Pilatus, Pontius 82
Pitra, Johann Baptiste 81, 84
Plato 36, 47, 97, 99, 197–199
Plotinus 38, 46–47, 135–136, 139, 148–149, 198
Pneumatomachians 145–146, 155, 190
Pomeroy, Samuel 51
Porphyry 30, 32–33, 35–36, 38, 47, 139
Posidonius VII, 31, 39, 50, 153, 168

Pouchet, Jean-Robert 2, 11, 59, 62, 79–81, 145
Prinzivalli, Emanuela 65
Proclus 36
Procopé, John Fredrik 72
Procopius of Gaza 4, 182
Procopius 3–5
Pseudo Athanasius 185–188
Pseudo Plato 160
Ptolemy 50
Pulcheria 190

Quircio, Marco 143

Rabbi Ammi 53
Rabbi Berekiah 53
Rabbi Hanina 53
Rabbi Hubna the Elder 53
Rabbi Huna 53
Rabbi Jassi 53
Rabbi Simon 53
Racine, Jean François 171
Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew 16, 48, 110, 132–135, 139, 141, 146, 151, 189–190
Rapp, Claudia 113
Rasmussen, Adam 34, 61, 96, 100
Red Sea 115
Riedinger, Utto 43
Rinaldi, Giancarlo 11
Risch, Franz Xaver 74
Robbins, Frank E. 14
Robertson, David G. 134, 139
Rondeau, Marie-Josèphe 72
Rouillard, Édouard 76
Rousseau, Philip 59
Rudberg, Stig Yngve VII, 76
Rufinus von Aquileia 1, 65, 72, 76, 179, 191
Runia, David T. 52–53, 55

Sabellius 55
Samaria 82
Sangin, Mstislav Antonini F. 46
Savvidis, Kyriakos 190, 197
Schäublin, Christoph 12, 14, 47, 72
Scheerer, Christoph 182
Scherbenske, Eric 1
Schreckenberg, Heinz 51
Schweizer, Eduard 12
Scott, Alan 44
Seibt, Klaus 56, 187
Serapion of Thmuis 3, 5
Severian of Gabbalah 5
Sextus Empiricus 45–47, 142
Simonetti, Manlio 63, 65, 176
Simplicius 28
Smets, Alexis 153–154, 164
Smith, Martin Ferguson 29
Smith, Warren 192–193, 195
Solomon 81, 112
Sorabji, Richard 128
Špidlík, Thomas 149
St. Petersburg, Public Library 4
Staats, Reinhard 190
State Historical Museum of Moscow 46
Stefaniw, Blossom 75
Stegmann, Anton 105
Stein, Markus 44
Stein, Peter 47
Stępień, Tomasz 133–134
Stockhausen, Annette von 62, 70
Strepsiades 111
Strutwolf, Holger 196
Swift, Louis J. 27
Syria 82, 145
Szmatula, Dominique 177

Ter Haar Romeny, Bas 4, 6–7, 12
Thales 50
Themistius 48
Theodore of Mopsuestia 9, 14
Theodore of Tyana 60–61
Theodoret 4, 11
Theodosius 190
Theon of Smyrna 50
Theophilus of Alexandria 184
Tieck, William Arthur 14, 59, 98, 185
Titus of Bostra 15, 34
Torchia, Natale J. 38
Torjesen, Karen Jo 75
Trevisan, Pietro 185
Tuccari, Luciana 83
Tura 88
Turner, Cuthbert Hamilton 60
Tzvetkova-Glaser, Anna 67

Uthemann, Karl-Heinz 69, 195, 199
Uzziah 43, 184

Vaggione, Richard 189
van Dam, Raymond 1, 110, 112, 114, 124
van Rompay, Lucas 3, 145
Villani, Barbara 75
von Ivánka, Endre 153

Williams, Megan 65
Wittig, Joseph 184
Wyrwa, Dietmar 33

Yam, Colten Cheuk-Yin 45, 120

Zachhuber, Johannes 37, 48, 63, 139, 189–190, 192–193, 199
Zaganas, Dimitrios 4, 176, 181, 185, 199
Zambon, Marco 33
Ziegler, Joseph 182

IV. Topics

abyss 6, 9, 81, 150
ἀγέννητος (ingenerate) 37, 132, 138
admiration (θαῦμα) 8–9, 16–20, 22–24, 100, 129, 151, 160, 165, 196
alcohol 177–178
allegory VII–VIII, 9–12, 18, 49, 51, 66–71, 75, 77, 81–82, 86–90, 92–99, 101, 113–114, 116, 119, 130, 141–142, 195–197
angels 4, 6, 10, 44, 51–54, 68, 70, 80, 87, 96, 112, 135, 137, 142, 144–147, 149, 181–183, 198
animals 13, 18–24, 47, 98, 114–115, 120–130, 160, 163–164, 168, 192
anthropology 69, 71, 93, 95, 99, 170, 187–191
anthropomorphism 34, 67, 84, 86–88, 92, 94, 99, 181
Antiochene exegesis 4–6, 13–14, 59, 195, 198–199
ants 128
ἀποκατάστασις πάντων 191, 193–195
apophatic 131
Arianism 34, 56, 66, 68–69
Aristotelianism 31–33, 40, 48, 139
ascent 135, 137, 175, 196
astrology 9, 11, 13, 17, 22, 29–30, 40–47, 115, 120
atheism 29
athlete 108
atomism 27–29
authentic/inauthentic VIII, 153, 170, 186

balance 180
baptism 166, 171–176, 195
bats 126
bees 125
birds 23–24, 115, 124–127, 145, 163
blood 23
body 29, 67–68, 71, 80–81, 92–93, 96, 160, 167, 191–195, 198
– spiritual body 68, 86, 96
botanic science VII, 116, 19

catena 3–5, 102
children 126–128
Christianity 17, 23, 39, 47, 51, 64, 81, 82, 84, 87, 95, 100, 116, 119, 139, 195, 197
Christology 8, 54, 56, 69, 71–72, 74, 77–78, 82, 85, 87, 92, 99, 142–143, 146, 175, 187, 189
chronology 2, 76, 85, 88, 91, 185, 189
church s. ecclesiology
city guide 108
coeternal with God 29–30
command of God 19, 48, 80, 91, 122, 142–144, 151, 160, 167
commentary as literary genre 1–4, 7, 14–15, 22, 25, 72, 88, 170, 199
comparisons (literary) 39, 55, 74, 101, 108–109, 117, 119, 147, 150,
concepts/notions 78, 133, 135, 139–141, 183
concordances 72
conflagration s. ἐκπύρωσις
cosmology VII, 2, 8, 10, 13–14, 18, 22, 27, 33, 39–40, 47, 50–51, 100, 114–115, 130, 198–199
crab 121
craftsman-model 30, 33–38, 168
creation process 6–7, 12, 30, 36–38, 137, 146
– double creation 192
crucifixion/cross 80, 83, 96, 173

darkness 6, 9–10, 12, 49, 142, 146, 198
death of Basil VIII–IX, 2, 156, 159, 171, 189–190
deeper sense 73, 101, 113–114, 119, 130
demiurge 33–36, 38, 145–146
demons 94, 195
devil 12, 70, 99, 108, 116, 173
disappointment about Basil's homilies 101, 110, 130, 160, 170
dogs 129
doxology 61–64, 162, 170

eagle 126
earth 6–8, 31–33, 47–49, 89, 138–141, 168
– flat earth 8, 50, 198
– spherical 50

ecclesiology 79–81, 92, 116–117, 122–123
edification 14, 78, 87, 109–110, 113, 123, 126, 129, 170
ἐκπύρωσις 39–40
elements 10–11, 16, 27, 32, 111, 145
– fifth element 32
elephant 21, 127
ἐνέργεια s. operation
Epicureanism 27–29
ἐπίνοια 92, 133
erotapokriseis 7, 172
eschatology 74, 83, 85, 87, 191, 193
eternal life 18, 74, 109, 113, 128, 145, 194, 196
ether 10, 148, 150, 198
eucharist 172, 175
evaporation 39–40
evil 33, 42, 47–49, 52–53, 141–142
eyes 158, 160, 168

fasting 178–180
fatalism 43, 46–47, 91
fig tree 119
figurative interpretation 73, 75–76, 78–86, 88, 96–97, 99
fire 39–40, 79–80, 148, 183–184, 195
firmament 6, 8, 10–13, 52, 70, 89–90, 92–93, 96–97, 198
fish 23–24, 120–123, 163
foreknowledge of God 43, 47, 192
fortune/random 28–29, 31, 46, 131, 142
fruits 117–119, 181

garments of skin 67–68, 96
genealogy 43
grass 116, 130

Hades 72
handbook 45, 115, 120, 123, 127, 130
heaven/sky 6, 16, 30–32, 108, 147–151, 198
– two heavens 8, 10, 12
– third heaven 66
Hebrew 6, 12, 53–54, 72, 105, 145
heresy 54, 56, 61, 66, 68, 98–99, 119, 154–155
Heterousianism 51, 55–56
Hexapla 44, 65
historical interpretation 73, 77, 80, 83, 85–86, 96, 113
Homerum ex Homero-principle 72
homilies as literary genre 1, 14–15, 72, 170, 199
homousios 34, 55, 63, 66, 132
horoscope 41, 42, 45
horses 110–111, 164
hypostasis s. substance

ideas (Platonic) s. paradigm
image of God 13, 51, 54, 67, 94, 156–157, 162–166, 192
incarnation 56, 66, 69, 78, 80–81, 92, 183
ingenerate s. ἀγέννητος
inspiration 75, 111–112, 185
interpolation 61

Judaism 54–56
justification by faith 174

κατάστασις 146–147
κοινόν – ἴδιον 134, 138, 139–140

lamb 74, 77, 129
language VIII, 12, 34, 93, 116, 118–119, 132–136, 180, 196
Last Judgment 43, 68, 71, 74, 78, 81, 86, 194
Latin 1, 15, 65, 69, 72, 103, 107, 124, 179–180
letter 60, 62, 69–71, 153, 172
library 65
light 6, 9–11, 74, 87, 92, 135–138, 146–151, 198
literal interpretation 12, 14, 73, 81–82, 89–96, 99–100, 117, 165, 170
literary coherence 154, 156–157, 159, 170, 174, 176–178, 180
literary genre 1–3, 7, 12, 15, 85, 88–89, 199

male/female 95, 122–123, 157, 165, 169, 192
Manichaeism 35, 48–50, 98, 142
manuscripts 3–5, 11, 37, 46, 60, 76, 102, 104–105, 107, 153–156, 161, 188
marriage 122–123
materialism 27, 29, 67

matter 33–38
metaphor 117, 150
monasticism 66–67, 69, 164–165, 173–174, 185
moon/lunar eclipse 9, 11, 13, 29, 41, 50, 91–92, 149, 198
music 16, 81, 85, 178

nakedness 95
nature, law of nature 18–23, 121–122, 128, 151
Nicene creed 62–63, 70–71, 131, 147, 190
notions s. concepts
numbers/numerology 91, 158–159, 169

ὀβελός 44, 103, 105
octopus 121
οἰκείωσις 20
olive tree 117–118
ontology 22, 24, 132, 141, 197
operation (ἐνέργεια) 24, 56, 131–138, 141, 144, 161
Origenism VII–VIII, 7–8, 13, 59, 63–65, 67–68, 71, 86, 88–89, 95, 99, 195–196
Origenist controversy VIII, 65–66, 99, 191

paradigm/Ideas (Platonic) 35–36, 52
paradise 66–67, 95–96, 153, 169, 179
paraenetic purpose of homilies VIII, 8–9, 14, 18, 20, 22, 24, 40, 78, 81–82, 84–86, 99, 113, 116–117, 127–130, 164
passions (πάθη) 68–69, 78, 88, 94, 123, 157–158, 163–164, 167, 192, 195
Peripatetics s. Aristotelism
philosophers 6, 12, 17, 27–29, 33, 39, 97, 112, 115, 127, 148–149
plants 22, 48–49, 114–119, 130
Platonism 32–36, 86–87, 96, 99, 139–140, 148, 197–199
pneumatology 10, 12, 61–64, 66, 70, 75, 77–81, 92, 111, 113, 136–137, 144–146, 155, 160–162, 175, 190
polemics 27, 37, 40, 45, 50, 56, 95, 184, 187, 191
poverty 125–126, 142
prayer 81, 83, 100, 111, 114, 129, 196
preaching 15, 83, 101, 107–108, 110–122, 124–125, 128–130, 169, 186
predicate 22, 131–132, 135–136, 138–141
preexistence of souls 191–195
prefaces (of the homilies) 101–102, 107–111, 113–114, 129–130
principle (ἀρχή) 5, 7–8, 131, 136–137, 161–162
– two principles 33–36, 49–50, 142
properties 132–134, 138–141
prophets 66–67, 74–75, 77, 83, 85–86, 99, 113, 145, 185
prosopological exegesis 72, 77
prosopopoeia 63
providence (πρόνοια) 21, 27–31, 38, 40, 47, 78, 88, 122–123, 125, 127, 192–193
purification 137, 175, 183–184, 195

ram 41, 46, 79–80
reincarnation 24, 47, 70, 193, 197–198
relation 134
resurrection 68, 71, 82–83, 86, 126–127, 174, 194, 197
revelation 111–112
rhetoric 7, 18, 51, 63, 97, 127, 134
rich 41, 60, 80, 116, 121, 168

sanctification 75, 81, 136–137, 144–145
satisfaction theory 82
science (natural) VII–VIII, 2, 7, 14, 22, 29, 50–51, 57, 93, 97–100, 113, 115, 120, 127, 170, 199
sea urchin 122–123
sea moray 123
sensation 13, 95, 132–133, 138, 143
sexual intercourse 123, 126, 193
soul 18, 21–24, 33, 47–48, 68–69, 74, 78–79, 87, 93–94, 96, 99, 136, 142, 167, 192, 194–197
– (Neoplatonic) universal soul 148–149
stars 17, 27, 40–47, 52, 74, 91–92, 108
Stoicism VII–VIII, 20, 29, 32–33, 35, 39–40, 50, 139–140
storks 125
subordination 63
substance 17–18, 28, 31, 37, 48, 55, 131–134, 138–141, 156, 161–162
– μία οὐσία τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις 63, 66, 70–71, 189
swallow 125

sympathy (as cosmological concept) 33, 38, 47
Syriac 3, 9, 105–107, 145, 156, 198

tachygraphers 155, 159, 172
τάχα 75, 77
temple of Jerusalem 109, 182
tent 148
theory/practice 78
title 3, 5, 59–60, 77, 80–81, 83–84, 86–87, 153, 185
Trinitarian thought 59, 63, 66, 78, 99, 132, 135–137, 143–146, 156–157, 160–162, 175, 186–187, 189, 191
two-level-exegesis 76–78, 82, 85–86, 89–91, 113, 196

universal salvation s. ἀποκατάστασις πάντων
ὑπόνοια 68, 97–98
upright posture 24, 158, 168

vegetarianism 169
vine, vineyard 117–118, 180–181
virgin birth 126–127
virtues 20, 78, 87, 90, 118–119, 129, 164–167

water(s) 8, 10–11, 31, 39–40, 70, 79–80, 89–90, 93, 96–98, 115, 144–145, 150, 198
widowhood 125, 127
wisdom of God 16–20, 22–23, 31–33, 35, 38, 40, 56, 108, 120, 129–131, 135–137, 160, 165, 167–168, 170

zodiac 41–43, 45–46
zoological science VII, 124