

Abstracts: Graduate Students Patristic Studies 2011

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS' THEOLOGY UPON MODERN ECCLESIOLOGY WITH A PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON JOHN ZIZIOULAS' WORKS

The theological value of the person, of freedom and of communion has been recently rediscovered and put into anew light for ecclesiology mostly through the effort of the Orthodox theologian Metropolitan John Zizioulas. His investigation continues the twentieth century ecclesiological revirement and proposes new directions and new foundations for ecclesiology.

At the basis of Zizioulas' works lies the theological achievement of the Cappadocian Fathers. His ecclesiology inspiration hails from the Trinitarian teaching as it has been forged in the fire of the theological debates of the fourth century. For Zizioulas the Fathers are sources of inspiration not only with their theological works, but also with their way of 'doing' theology and living ecclesologically. For Zizioulas these two realms, viz. theology and ecclesiology, should be considered together since the ecclesial experience of the Fathers shaped their theology, and vice-versa. For Zizioulas, the praxis of the Church is more than a human or ecclesial imitation of the Trinitarian model since for him "the ecclesial being is bound to the very being of God" and "the mystery of the Church has its birth in the entire economy of the Trinity".

In the present study I propose an investigation of the way in which the Cappadocian Fathers have influenced Zizioulas' ecclesiology. After presenting briefly the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians, I will direct my enquiry towards Zizioulas' understanding of: (a) the relation between the bishop and the church; and (b) the relation between the local and the universal church in light of the Cappadocians' Trinitarian theology.

Matthew Bemis, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

The Anti-Christian Polemic Before and After Constantine

For centuries Christianity has found itself at the center of countless arguments and debates. Much of the time these debates were focused on internal ecclesiastical matters. But debate and dissension was not an activity confined merely to the ecclesiastical realm; antagonisms also came from outside. One of the main causes for these hostilities early on was the fact that Christianity was steadily becoming an important part of the Roman Empire. The most important early moment in solidifying and strengthening the stature of Christianity within Roman society was Constantine's ascendancy to the position of emperor. But this change was not something welcomed by all. One person who became known for his vehemence against this change was Julian. In general, Julian desired two things: the expulsion of Christianity and the restoration of paganism. He constructed his own polemic to support this view. Julian's attempt to undermine Christianity was in no way a new thing; he had several predecessors. The main difference with Julian was that he was setting forth his polemic at a time after Christianity had been embraced by the empire. The aim of this paper is to examine how the dramatic change instigated by Constantine influenced the arguments employed by the anti-Christian polemicists. It will do this by looking at two people who found themselves living before and after the implementation of Constantine's Christian measures: Celsus and Julian. It will examine the types of arguments they offered and the rhetorical strategies they utilized. It will also examine the influence Constantine's reign had upon the nature of the anti-Christian polemic.

Matt Briel, Fordham University

Matt Briel, Fordham University*Gregory the Theologian and the Emperor Julian on Greek Literature*

Gregory Nazianzen's two orations against Julian (Or. 4 and 5) have begun to receive attention in the English speaking world in the past ten years (Kaldellis, Elm). Earlier European scholarship has largely taken the form of identifying Biblical and classical allusions (Lugaresi, Kurmann, Bernardi). One of the main concerns of these orations is Julian's edictum de professoribus. Susanna Elm's work persuasively demonstrates that Gregory's argument against Julian is secular. Julian claims that, because these authors (Homer, Demosthenes, Herodotus et alii) were religious men, in order to appropriately appreciate them one must worship the same gods. If Christians think that these ancients were fools, which they must be if they get the central question of God wrong, why would they study them? (Julian 423 b) Kaldellis cogently argues that Gregory does not answer Julian's claim and that this is a source of continuing anxiety for later Christian Byzantine literati.

However, in the same orations Gregory has some remarkable play with the word "logos." This fact is mentioned in scholarship but not much engaged. But in a theology of the Logos, if anywhere, are the resources for a more adequate response to Julian's argument for the integrity of religion and culture. Some understanding of the Logos in Gregory's thought has the possibility of answering Julian's criticism. The Logos, the One who gives form and rationality to all the kosmos, is known better by the Christians who know him intimately in his Incarnation than by the pagans who see the Logos, as it were, ex umbris et imaginibus. In this paper I will argue that the resources for a response to Julian's argument in letter 36 can be found both in Gregory's play with the word logos in Orations 4-5 and in his theology of the Logos.

Emily Cain, Fordham University*Gregory of Nyssa: Moses' Journey through the Mirror Darkly*

This paper investigates Gregory of Nyssa's journey of ascent within his greatest mystical work, *The Life of Moses*. Drawing on other Nyssan texts, especially his funeral oration for Meletius, it argues that the hermeneutical key for understanding *The Life of Moses* is 1 Corinthians 13:11-12: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (NRSV). Indeed, Gregory describes Moses' journey in three stages: the childhood stage of knowledge, the teenage stage of asceticism, and finally the adult stage of seeing God in darkness. It is here that Gregory inimitably redefined skotos as ainigmati to link the word used in Exodus to the meaning used in 1 Corinthians. Through the use of this verse, Gregory offered one of the most innovative ways of hiding his own innovation.

John Carr, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology*Crossing the Hermeneutical Gap: Ancient and Modern Interpretative Method*

Modern methods of historical research have made possible a vast wealth of knowledge about the contexts of Scripture and the late antique culture of the church fathers. These methods have allowed us to understand, to a remarkable degree, how Scriptural and patristic writings were authored and received in their original context. The writers of these ages themselves, however, were remarkably unconcerned with investigating the original context of the texts they were interpreting. For example, St Cyril of Alexandria does not hesitate to marshal quotations from St John's Gospel to support his critique of Nestorius, whose views St John could have known nothing

John Carr, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

about. How can we understand the dichotomy between ancient and modern ways of interpreting texts? In order to begin addressing this question, I will investigate the interpretive principles of the church fathers themselves, as well as the writers of the New Testament, in order to find out how they negotiated the chronological distance separating them from authors of previous ages. I will begin with interpretations of the Old Testament in the New, such as the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:38-42) and St Paul's interpretation of the ox who treads the grain (I Timothy 5:18). I will then investigate the use of early patristic quotations in the controversy over icons in the writings of St John of Damascus. In each case, I will be asking whether the author, in interpreting his predecessor, is eliding or investigating the historical context. Is there a 'hermeneutical gap' which the Biblical or patristic author ignores in his attempt to bridge the ages? Or, is there a transcendent quality to interpretation which allows for communion in truth across great distances of time and space without a detailed investigation of historical context? These are the questions I will be examining in my paper.

Elizabeth Clemmons, University of Notre Dame

Solomon's Paradise: Images of the Believer in the Odes of Solomon

In this paper I intend to explore the characterization of the believer in the Odes of Solomon. I will first present three of the predominant images employed by the Odist; the believer is described as a tree, as a bride or beloved, and, in a few, but significant instances, as a temple. In the second section the biblical sources for these images will be suggested, including discussion of the theological setting of these images in the wisdom tradition. Specifically, I will assert that the figure of Solomon is in the background of and unites these images. Solomon affords the Odist a way to draw together biblical theology concerning creation, God's nuptial relationship to the people, and the meaning of the temple to express the relationship of the Christian believer to God. In the final section I will articulate the theological understanding of the believer, expressed mystically through these images, in the Odes: the human person, from initiation into understanding of Christ Incarnate is a dynamic new creation, growing in this life toward full union with God in eternity. Note that the research on the Odes of Solomon draws upon the Syriac (and Greek) texts, including the Peshitta.

Rebecca Coughlin, McGill University

A Brief Reconsideration of the Doctrine of the Incarnation in Dionysius the Areopagite

Dionysius the Areopagite has been severely condemned, by many claiming to represent orthodox Christianity, on the basis that his theology does not give a full account of the Incarnation or its implications for man's salvation. However, despite the claims of many of his critics, Dionysius is far from ambivalent about the Incarnation; rather, the person of Jesus permeates the whole corpus. In this paper I will unravel an orthodox Dionysian Christology which attempts to fully appreciate our author's Neoplatonism without falsely discrediting his Christianity. For this purpose I will examine the views of two of Dionysius' more vocal present-day opponents, John M. Rist and Kenneth-Paul Wesch, and suggest why their interpretations do not fully appreciate the fundamental Dionysian understanding of the relation of God to man and of man to the world through God. My treatment of the Dionysian Corpus will involve a philosophical reading of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, showing how a better understanding of this often neglected text can help to give a fuller picture of Dionysius' theological positions. I will especially examine the meaning of theurgy within the Dionysian Corpus and show that a clear understanding of this central term can illuminate

Rebecca Coughlin, McGill University

Dionysius' view of the Incarnation. For this reconsideration I will draw on the recent work of Alexander Golitzin and Eric Perl.

Gregory Edwards, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Ministry and Church Structure in Eastern Orthodox Perspective: Metropolitan John Zizioulas's Contribution to the Study of the Pauline Literature

In this paper, I will examine Metropolitan John Zizioulas's interpretation of the Pauline material on ministry and church structure, and particularly how this hermeneutic has evolved over the course of his career. His most pertinent thoughts on the Pauline material, specifically 1Corinthians, were developed in a series of occasional essays and articles written in the 25-year period between 1969 and 1994.

There, the main idea, to which Zizioulas returns again and again with more insights, is that of the charismata in 1Cor 12-13, about which he develops a brilliant and convincing argument that accords with the findings of other Pauline scholars who have adopted much different methodologies, such as Gerd Theissen.

In this reading, he argues that every person, by virtue of his or her incorporation into the body of Christ at baptism, is "ordained," i.e. put into a particular place and order, and also bestowed a particular charisma, which can also be called a gift or a ministry. These ministries are exercised always within the context of a community constituted by the Holy Spirit and have no meaning outside of this network of relationships. Although all ministries are equal, there is a specificity of relationship between each of them, thus creating a hierarchy, a term which Zizioulas takes great care to define, since, for him, it is widely misunderstood. Paradoxically, it is precisely the diversity of gifts apportioned by the Holy Spirit that leads to unity in the body of Christ.

Finally, we will look at the influence that Zizioulas's interpretation of 1Corinthians has had at the ecumenical level, where he has used this hermeneutic to address such vital issues in ministry as ontology vs. function, the validity of orders, and witness to the world.

Zachary Gresham, University of Notre Dame

The Trier Ivory: A Triple Adventus into New Rome

The Trier Ivory has a bevy of interpretations behind it, none of which unanswerably prove the time or place of the reliquary adventus portrayed thereon. Two examples will suffice to illustrate the theories' variety.

Suzanne Spain has proposed, in an exhaustive account of the scholarship to 1977, the interesting hypothesis that the ivory portrays the return of the True Cross back to Jerusalem in 630 under Emperor Heraclius and his niece-bride Martina. Two years later, Kenneth H. Holum and Gary Vikan posit that the relics were those of St. Stephen the First Martyr, brought to Constantinople under Theodosius II in 421.

□Procopius' Buildings presents another distinct possibility for the event depicted in the ivory: the Justinianic transfer of three sets of Apostolic relics to the Constantinopolitan Church of the Apostles in 550.

□This adheres to the time and place typically ascribed to the ivory's production (Constantinople, 6th c), and offers a date of composition quite close to the date of the event itself. This gives the theory the major advantage of perhaps endearing the artist to the emperor in power, not unheard of in the age of Justinian.

Drew Harmon, Princeton Theological Seminary

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTUS MEDIATOR IN AUGUSTINE

This paper traces Augustine's thought development of Christus mediator. To that end, I follow the Bishop's "progression" of the true mediator from his earlier to his later, more austere conceptions. Beginning with an exploration of Epistola 11 to Nebridius, I show Augustine's Christological sharpening from less to more tangible ideas of the one mediator between God and humanity, the man, Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2.5). With this brief, foundational analysis in view, the remainder of this paper serves as a reading of two of Augustine's later works: de Civitate ix.15 and de Trinitate iv. In conclusion, I argue that Augustine's late conceptions of Christ as mediator emphasize the body of Christ in a unique way.

In many ways this paper is an extended investigation of Confessiones book vii (ca. 397/8), where Augustine recalls his "conversion" to Neoplatonist Christianity. While still relying heavily on Plotinus vis-à-vis Ambrose, Augustine took noticeable steps toward a more "grounded" and "earthy" Christology. Reverberations of Plotinian thought echo throughout his account, but the philosophical impetus alone did not stick. Even though Augustine coincided the importance of exitus/reditus in his application of Platonist thought, their works (libros platonicorum) nevertheless lacked one thing: the incarnation of the nous (viz., the humility of God in Christ). Indeed, against the grain of the Plotinian fabric, Augustine moved toward a more concrete notion of Christ as mediator.

Gregory Harrigle, Boston College

AETIUS' SYNTAGMATION AND SOME LINGERING QUESTIONS

Aetius of Alexandria's Syntagmation (first published in 359) remains his only extant writing; of which we have but a portion via Epiphanius. This work appeared amidst the drama of contentious debates occurring at successive local Synods, culminating in those later recognized as having binding (universal) effect. Aetius, himself a skilled dialectician, was naturally suited for debate both publically and literarily. The Syntagmation which originally contained some 300 syllogisms appears in direct response to Athanasius' work De Synodis. Athanasius insists upon the logic of "homoousian" relation of the Father and the Son against neo-Arian objections and against compromising terminology offered by those favoring the "homoian" position. In order to refute both positions, i.e., "homoiousian" (like in substance) and "homoousian" views Aetius proposed numerous 'puzzles' (aporia), that are designed to lead one to conclude the logical and theo-logical fallacy of holding these views. The potency of these arguments as wielded by Aetius and later applied by Eunomius is impressive. The Syntagmation remains (even in diminished form) a devastatingly effective set of arguments critiquing orthodox trinitarian doctrine. This paper is intended to analyse these propositions from three perspectives: the logical species of specific arguments and their basis in neo-platonic philosophy, the character of Christian debate in the fourth century, and the substance of responses made by Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea and the other Cappadocian Fathers. What is the state of Aetius' propositions today? Was the logic of the debaters Aristotelian, Platonic, a mixture? What was the place of debate for educating theologians in Alexandria, Constantinople, Antioch? Were specific objections answered or were rhetorical responses provided by the Cappadocians that failed to speak to certain points? Has Aetius been successfully refuted?

Jesse Hoover, Baylor University

*Structuring the Divine Economy:
The Internal Logic of the Fount of Knowledge*

Jesse Hoover, Baylor University

John of Damascus's great masterpiece, the Fount of Knowledge, has been oddly sidelined by modern scholarship. Despite its undoubted importance to the Byzantine and western medieval traditions, few translations of the unified work as a whole are available. There appear to be two reasons for this failure: first, the Fount appears to have failed the modern test of "originality," its genius consisting in masterful summation rather than innovation. Second, the internal coherence of the tripartite text seems not at all clear.

In my paper I argue that an in-depth discussion of the internal structure of the Fount can function as an effective antidote for both difficulties. I argue that the arrangement of the Orthodox Faith and Heresies proves an intentional correlation between these two subdivisions of the work. Unlike earlier authors who have attempted to wed the structure of the Orthodox Faith to the Nicene Creed, it appears that both divisions rely rather on a strictly chronological rendering of salvation history. Both the Orthodox Faith and Heresies embrace the whole of human history from creation to eschaton, the salvation history of the one darkly paralleled by the demonic parody of the other. In this intentional structure, the Damascene appears to be the first Christian author to structure his theology according to the strictures of a linear salvation history narrative.

Alexander Huggard, Marquette University

Isaac Iudaeus and the Latin Trinitarian Tradition

In the tumult of Rome in the 360s, Isaac Iudaeus composed two trinitarian texts, *De Fide Isatis ex Iudaeo* and *Expositio Fidei Catholicae*. These two texts supply the foundation for expositing the Latin trinitarian theology of Isaac. This paper will build upon the work of Lewis Ayres, Michel Barnes, and Daniel Williams, which conceives of Latin trinitarian theology not as a response to the theology of Marcellus of Ancyra, but as a distinctive tradition with Latin sources. Like many other theologies in the fourth century Latin West, Isaac centers his trinitarian argument on the unity of nature and substance and the plurality of source and origin. In this he follows much of Tertullian's anti-monarchian argument in *Adversus Praxean*.

This paper will present an historical and literary context for Isaac Iudaeus in late fourth century Rome. From this context, I will then present a Latin trinitarian theology that shows a consistency of terms, themes and exegetical strategies and assumptions. This paper will present an overview of these terms, themes and exegetical strategies as they pass through the works of Tertullian, Phoebadius, and Damasus. Finally, I will show how Isaac develops the distinction between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through the distinct terms and exegetical strategies of the Latin trinitarian tradition.

Jennifer Jamer, Fordham University

Gregory of Nyssa and the Christian Response to Later Pagan Thinkers: A Consideration of On the Soul and Resurrection

In *On the Soul and Resurrection*, one of Gregory of Nyssa's most sophisticated and intriguing texts, several features surprise modern readers and provoke questions about the Cappadocian father's motivations for writing and the needs of his audience. Among these features are Gregory's representation of himself as being almost enslaved by grief in the wake of his brother Basil's death, his choice of his sister as his more learned instructor and interlocutor, and his extraordinary concern about physical disintegration after death and the reality of the bodily resurrection.

This paper argues that these rhetorical strategies make *On the Soul and Resurrection* a sophisticated response to the anti-Christian criticisms that were posed by popular pagan philosophers such as Porphyry of Tyre – whose language Nyssa occasionally echoes – and Julian

Jennifer Jamer, Fordham University

the Apostate. Surviving epistles reveal that Gregory of Nyssa was well-aware of the philosophical temptations of contemporary neo-platonist philosophy for many educated Christians. This text is meant to refute some of the more persuasive pagan arguments against Christianity, such as the imperfection of Christian revelation and learning in comparison with Hellenistic education and the idea that Christianity promoted and gave license to the passions (in contrast with the “Stoicizing Platonism” that was fashionable among fourth-century pagans). Gregory uses a self-conscious reversal of expectations; it is philosophy which enslaves Gregory with grief, passion which motivates right action when rightly harnessed and pagan education which is imperfect and incapable of promoting virtue.

Jangho Jo, Baylor University

From Eschatological Babylon to Historical Nineveh: Augustine's re-conceptualization of Rome

While the early Christian authors in the second and third centuries often identify Rome with a “whore of Babylon” in the Apocalypse of John, Augustine breaks with such reception of Rome as eschatological Babylon. Since 313, the church rapidly gained a political favor and power in the Roman Empire, so that the ecclesial relationship with the state came to be complicated. On the one hand, within the prevalent chiliasm, the empire was still regarded as worldly evil force. At the same time, however, the church enjoyed the peace which the empire provided so that she encouraged her people to pray for the empire. In the middle of conflicting reception of Rome, the eschatological image of Rome as a “whore of Babylon” could not be held.

In *The City of God* Augustine shows multiple imageries of Rome which are entirely based upon the Scriptures. Though Augustine inherits eschatological image of Rome from previous generations, his other imageries such as Nineveh and Babylon -as in Jeremiah 29, not in Revelation- open a new possibility to accept the state in a different perspective. Moreover, the shift of imagery is tightly connected with the purpose of *The City of God*. By changing the image of Rome from eschatological Babylon to historical Nineveh in Jonah, Augustine tries to establish a new attitude toward the empire. His re-conceptualization of Rome as Nineveh (*City of God* book 21), focuses on missiological responsibility of the church for the sake of the empire. This identification reveals what Augustine intended in his magnum opus. In *The City of God*, the goal of the bishop was what prophet Jonah did to Nineveh, i.e., to overthrow “eternal” Rome in the mind of the Romans, and rebuild a spiritual Rome which signifies its turning to Christian faith. Augustine's re-conceptualization of Rome indicates that the *City of God* was produced out of evangelistic fervor of the bishop.

Ian Jones, Fordham University

Duties of a Steward: Sts Basil the Great and John Chrysostom on the Moral Value of Animals

Christian ethics can benefit from a critical examination of predominant attitudes toward non-human creation. Does non-human creation have value that is merely instrumental – a means to the end of human happiness and flourishing – or does it have inherent worth even when considered apart from humans? This paper explores Eastern Christian tradition on the status of animals with reference to two major fourth-century Fathers, St Basil the Great and St John Chrysostom. Although their discourses do not center on animals in particular, the remarks of these saints considered in context reveal their underlying views of humanity's relationship to the rest of creation. An exploration of their attitudes can help us to articulate a Christian vision of the intrinsic value of animals and our ethical duties toward them.

Ian Jones, Fordham University

This paper notes that the ascetic focus of both saints is grounded in the reality of Christ's having reopened access to paradise, in which all creatures are in harmony with God and each other. Although these Fathers do not condemn the killing of animals for food, which God permitted as a concession to – and reflection of – creation's fallen condition, they do not view the treatment of animals as a matter of moral indifference. All of creation has inherent worth, graded according to the nature of each kind of creature, and Christians are to strive to regain the paradisaical relationships originally intended by God. Animals are closest to humans and deserve our kindness, because their capacities make them most capable of benefiting or suffering at our hands.

David Jorgensen, Princeton University

'From the Beginning It Was Not So': Implications of the Teachings on Divorce for Second Century Heresiology

Although Moses appears in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament figure, only once is he presented in a way in which he might be construed as ordaining legislation contrary to the will of God: in the context of the controversy narrative between Jesus and the Pharisees over the legality of divorce in Mt. 19.1 12 (par. Mk. 10.1 12). In this pericope, Jesus claims that Moses permitted divorce only because of the "hardheartedness" of the people, "but from the beginning it was not so." As second century Christians engaged in the process of constructing and maintaining boundaries between Christianity and Judaism, a central issue that needed resolution was the proper relationship to the Law of Moses. Therefore this gospel pericope became the site of a contentious exegetical debate. Was Moses acting in accordance with the will of God, or is the Law contaminated with human – even diabolical – interpolations?

Other teachings on divorce elsewhere in the canonical gospels and in 1 Corinthians – teachings that are not entirely in agreement with those found in this pericope – provided a host of exegetical resources that would invite a range of solutions to the theological problem raised by Mt. 19.1 12. For at stake was not merely the relatively minor issue of divorce, but the very nature of God as Lawgiver. Are some of God's commandments only applicable during certain historical dispensations? Is the Law of Moses so contaminated so as to be rendered completely untrustworthy and irrelevant? Is the deity who gave Moses the Law, in fact, the same deity who created the cosmos? These considerations would then have significant implications for second century constructions of orthodoxy and heresy.

This paper examines the interpretation of this pericope, and related New Testament material, according to a variety of second century exegetes, including Marcion, Ptolemy, Irenaeus, and Tertullian

Han-luen Kantzer Komline, University of Notre Dame

FROM HISTORY TO HYMNODY: THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA'S COMMENTARY ON PSALM 40 (LXX)

Theodore was a prolific exegete. Among the few works that have come down to us today from a vast output that was once renowned "in all the churches of the East" is his Commentary on the Psalms, which H. Lietzmann dubbed, in 1940, the "most famous commentary of the most famous biblical commentator." This tome remains a key text for understanding Theodore's exegetical method and that of the "Antiochene School" of exegesis, of which he is thought to be the paradigmatic representative. Yet although a number of general volumes on Theodore or Theodore's exegesis in recent years have touched on his Commentary on the Psalms, few in-depth analyses of Theodore's comments on individual Psalms have emerged.

This paper offers a close reading of Theodore's exposition of Psalm 40 (LXX) as a contribution to

Han-luen Kantzer Komline, University of Notre Dame

the larger picture of Theodore's work in this important commentary, a picture that has yet to be brought into sharp focus. This close reading will identify both Theodore's thoroughgoing use of pagan analytical tools and his efforts to apply Psalm 40 to the worship life of his monastic community. Theodore's educational debts not only to the school of Libanius, but also to his monastic formation in the asketerion of Diodore, then, come through clearly in his comments on this Psalm. Furthermore, Theodore's comments showcase his successful integration of lessons learned from these two phases of his education. Precisely the particular historical referent of Psalm 40, a referent he identifies with the help of pagan analytical tools, serves as the foundation for Theodore's exhortation to his monastic contemporaries.

Zachary Kostopoulos, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

The Urban Ascetic: An Exploration of Origen's Transformative Cognitive Asceticism

The study of Origen's asceticism is the study of an intimately personal aspect of his character, one rooted deep in conviction and belief, and more interestingly one that points to a window which shows us how he may have lived his life in the world. Origen's life in the world, or in the urban center of 2nd-3rd century Alexandria, is an important aspect of studying his ascetic life, and is the driving force behind my research. As Christopher Haas explains in his book on Alexandria in antiquity, "It is hardly conceivable that Alexandria's bustling urban milieu failed to influence profoundly the development of these intellectuals [for my purpose, Origen]."

The aim of the following paper then can be broken down into two sections that come together to create my thesis. First, I will set out to demonstrate Origen's ascetic life as ultimately "anti-urban" or as I will further discuss it, intellectual. Origen's discomfort with the world around him produces his unique cognitive spirituality, which manifests itself in ascetic practices involving his approach to Scripture, prayer, and man's life with God. His overwhelming tendency to seek an ascent of the mind towards the divine in nearly all of his writings points to his cognitive asceticism, and desire to truly transcend his body and the material around him. This is where the second part of my thesis now comes in; I will move further to demonstrate that Origen, through his cognitive asceticism ultimately desires and believes in changing the world around him, transforming the city of Alexandria. His intellectual spirituality then, in its transformative ascent to the divine, works to drastically engage its surroundings and impact the world at large. Important to my research and thesis will be the employment of ascetic theory. On the grounds of pure theory, I plan to discuss and engage Origen's cognitive asceticism and his desire to transform his surroundings.

Jackson Lashier, Marquette University

The Redefinition of Theos in the works of Irenaeus

This historical study will address an important Trinitarian development in the works of Irenaeus of Lyons, namely, the redefinition of the title "God" from naming the Father alone to naming the uncreated divine essence common to Father, Son, and Spirit. My thesis is that this redefinition enabled Irenaeus to counter Valentinian dualist theologies that divided the divine essence into a series of gradated, divine spiritual beings or Aeons. Conversely, Irenaeus taught a simple divine nature, equally encompassed by Father, Son, and Spirit. The attribution of "God" to this common nature preserves its simplicity while maintaining the divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit in accord with Irenaeus' understanding of salvation.

I will demonstrate my thesis by (1) establishing the standard second century use of "God" to refer

Jackson Lashier, Marquette University

to the Father alone through engagement with various passages from the Apologists, (2) addressing the challenge of Valentinian dualist theologies, and (3) engaging key Irenaeus texts that evidence the redefinition of "God" in response to this challenge. The third point will entail primarily the juxtaposition of Irenaeus' two alternate interpretations of Ephesians 4:6. In the first (Haer. 2.2.6), "God" refers to the Father alone, who is "above all, through all, and in us all." In the second (Haer. 5.18.2 and Epid. 5), following his development of the divine natures of the Son and Spirit, "God" refers equally to the Father who is "above all," the Son who is "through all," and the Spirit who is "in us all."

Marinel Marcu, Patriarchate of Romania

Clement of Alexandria: the Orthodox view of Virginity and Marriage and the denial of Gnosticism

The extreme Encratite tendencies that rejected marriage and preached sexual renunciation as a condition for salvation did not go unchallenged by the mainstream Christian Church. The defense of the goodness and lawfulness of marriage was a commonplace among all the Church Fathers, against the Gnostic and Encratitic teachings. Yet, the fullest and most articulate defense of marriage and response to the Gnostics was made by Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215). He dedicates the third book of his *Stromata* to the denial of the Gnostics, both the extreme ascetics and the libertines. He presents a most moderate position and left to us one of the most extensive discussions of sexuality and marriage to be found in the patristic age. In his attempt to refute the Gnostic, heretical teaching on creation, body, marriage and sexuality, Clement explains the right basis for marriage and the right basis for celibacy, and condemns the wrong basis for them. He discusses the idea of the superiority of celibacy over marriage and explains the biblical texts which have been used to sustain this idea. His thought makes an important contribution towards the formation of a true Orthodox Christian teaching on this issue.

Nick Marinides, Princeton University

Spiritual direction of laypeople on seventh-century Sinai

Mt. Sinai, long venerated as a principal Christian holy site, is only now starting to receive close scholarly scrutiny. Critical editions and first-time translations of key texts have made them available for more profound historical and theological research into the rich Christian tradition of the peninsula. Thus far the historical context of Sinai has been fleshed out in several important articles and monographs, but most of the theological works of its great monastic writers have yet to receive extensive study.

In this paper I will contribute my two mites to such historical-theological by looking at the depiction and prescription of lay piety in St. John Klimakos, who flourished in the early seventh century, and his successor by about a generation, St. Anastasios of Sinai. John's famous ascetical masterpiece, the *Ladder*, has little to say directly to laypeople, but that little serves to organize the world on Christian terms and provide a specific place for laypeople and their salvation.

Anastasios's writings have much more to say, especially in his *Questions and Answers* and his *Tales*. The closeness of these two writers, within a century, allows us to glimpse the way that they successively received and then shaped the Sinaite monastic tradition of spiritual direction, and applied this wisdom of the desert to the needs of their fellow Christians who remained in the world.

This was a world deeply troubled by the inroads of foreign peoples and religions into what had once been the heartlands of the eastern Roman Empire. Within it, Sinai stood as a crossroads of holiness, founded on its Old Testament associations and built up by generations of ascetics and

Nick Marinides, Princeton University

pilgrims. These sojourners came from all corners of the Christian oikoumene and, pitching their tabernacles at the place where God had manifested himself and continued to do so, forged a unique spiritual tradition that mingled monastic wisdom with lay devotion.

Mark Montague, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

"The parts of Christ are the two natures": Composite Hypostasis according to St. John Damascene

Some theologians today like to cite St. John as a champion of the view that there was no substantial difference between Dyophysite and Monophysite Christology in his day. And yet if these same theologians were to look more closely at St. John's Christology, many of them would likely object that it is crypto-Nestorian! While we cannot resolve these debates, we can point to some of the neglected concepts at work in them. In particular, we examine the notion of "composite hypostasis" in the works of St. John Damascene, focussing on the the relationship of this concept with his other key concepts of components, enhypostata, and natures, all within the larger context of two "dialectic methods" that must be distinguished in his thought. Reference is made to the Trinitarian and especially Christological doctrines that St. John is attempting to elucidate.

Jonathan Morgan, Marquette University

Circumcision of the Heart in Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril of Alexandria is best known in the history of Christian doctrine as the defender of Christological orthodoxy against Nestorius. The emphasis on his Christology has in turn given rise to scholarly attention to his soteriology since both go hand in hand. One of the glaring problems in Cyrillian scholarship concerning his soteriology is the apparent disconnect between his emphasis on theosis by virtue of the Incarnation and his insistence on the cross as necessary for salvation. Scholars such as Gross and du Manoir have gone so far to say that Cyril never reconciles these two different 'viewpoints' and, perhaps, never detects the 'problem' of a disconnect in the first place. However, a closer examination of Cyril's exegesis, particularly his interpretation of circumcision, reveals that Cyril's soteriology is not piecemeal. His excursus on circumcision by the Spirit, or circumcision of the heart, in his Commentary on John shows the rich and multi-faceted approach Cyril takes in unpacking the soteriological implications of Christ's person and work. By exploring Cyril's concept of circumcision of the heart, I will attempt to show that the apparent disconnect between Incarnation and atonement attributed to Cyril by some scholars is a false assumption, and that his soteriology is indeed more holistic.

Rachel Nelson, Boston College

New Deeds of Heroism and Manifestations of Virtue: the motifs of the Roman Spectacula in the Passio Perpetuae

The Roman arena was not only the realm of gladiatorial contests and staged hunts, but also the context for the performance of "fatal charades" (executions involving the reenactment of mythological narratives). Contemporary sources stress the reality of these representations (Herakles is really burned, the great navies of the past engage in actual battle) and the semi-divine power of the emperor at whose command myth is actualized in the present. This combination of mythological reenactment and the display of imperial power was a challenge to Christian communities, particular when Christians were executed in the arena. The authors of early acta martyrium responded to this challenge by presenting martyrdom as a literary fatal charade, in

Rachel Nelson, Boston College

which the passion narrative replaces Roman myth and God's power that of the emperor. As part of a larger focus on representation and display, *Passio Perpetuae* uses the arena as a "stage" upon which the martyrs "perform" their joy, glorification and victory and, in the process, image Christ crucified and glorified. The contests in the amphitheater are not sufferings to be endured, but opportunities to make manifest the Christians' joy in being able to participate in Christ's glorification. Like the Jesus' of John's passion, the martyrs are confident in their victory and in complete control of the situation. The Christ they portray is in absolute control of all things and grants reassuring knowledge to his faithful ones through visions. Theirs is truly a Lord "to whom is splendor and immeasurable power forever and ever" (*Passio Perp.* 21.11).

Edward Novis, Graduate Theological Union

Textual Anthropology in St. Maximus the Confessor

The absolutely unified (supra)cosmic vision of St. Maximus the Confessor harmonizes Christological, universal, and anthropological perspectives through the lens of textual, especially with the human in its center as interpreter. Thus, my paper will parse the ways in which Maximus' logoi are held together simultaneously by Christ as Creator and humanity as exegete, both projects ultimately unifying in the Incarnation. Standing inside and outside the text, both the human logoi and the Incarnated Logos (i.e. the Logos made logos) occupy the central place in the world as beings able to read, and as such, can properly interpret and consciously traverse the three layers of relationality (being, well-being, eternal well-being) to present a single, cohesive gift of supreme signification to the Father. As the human ascends from himself (being) through his horizontal relationship with the universe (well-being) and onto Christ (eternal well-being), he raises the whole of creation with him. When accepted by God, he is the agent who unites the created with the uncreated in a perichoretic dance of unity in difference. With ascension and unity as his guiding principles for comprehending and applying the Word of God in its many permutations, Maximus bonds multiplicity into harmony through a single exegetical technique that does not freeze relationship by submitting it to static structures but frees the play of polyvalence by demonstrating the underlying, living, and dynamic Logos that cuts through them. In his exegetical anthropology, Maximus demonstrates that the initially gross for-itself entity spiritualizes himself and ultimately finds a home within the interstices of (supra)cosmic textuality, so intimately weaved in that the individual can only be called a (con)text although he never loses his independent existence.

Steven Payne, Harvard Divinity School

Letter writing as ascetic practice in Evagrius of Pontus' Great Letter

This paper examines the activity of letter writing as an ascetic practice in the Great Letter of Evagrius of Pontus (345-399, c.e.). Scholars have proposed that Evagrius' more obscure Great Letter and *Kephalaia Gnostika* betray an esoteric approach to Christianity that is more concealed in his 'palatable', 'orthodox' works, i.e. the *Praktikos* and *Chapters on Prayer*. This paper, however, seeks to demonstrate the unity of Evagrius' thought through its central thesis: The Great Letter is a prolonged exercise in and example of Evagrius' second mode of ascetic being as explicated in the *Praktikos* - *theoria physiki*. His prolonged meditation on the act of writing is not meant to mask heresy or confuse the uninitiated. Rather, he exhibits to his reader first hand an example of *theoria physiki*. In this mode, all being-in-the-world and beings-in-the-worlds direct the ascetic gaze to a contemplation of the Thing-in-itself, or rather, the "thing" not

Steven Payne, Harvard Divinity School

as "thing" but as Personal encounter. Thus, in the Great Letter, the fundamental materiality of letter writing becomes the sacred space in which Evagrius lovingly engages with the Triune God.

Vitalijs Permjakovs, University of Notre Dame

Origins and Significance of the Use of Oil/Myron at the Dedication of Churches in Eastern Liturgical Rites

"[Oil] gives anointing to altars and they bear the sacrifice of reconciliation" (Ephrem, Virg. 4.10). This reference in one of the madroshe of Ephrem the Syrian represents one of the earliest allusions to the rite of anointing of a new altar with oil/myron in the course of its consecration for liturgical use. The received texts of the church dedication rites, both in the Western and Eastern traditions, feature the anointing of a new altar and of the nave walls as one of constitutive elements – however, the early history of the Eastern Christian rites of church dedication, particularly of the use of oil/myron, has not yet received its due attention from the scholarship. This paper, based on my doctoral dissertation, offers a look into the early (and rather sparse) evidence for the anointing of altars in the Christian East (Syria, Palestine, Egypt) in the 4th-7th centuries, prior to the appearance of the first complete texts of dedication rites at the end of the 8th century (e.g. in the Byzantine euchologion cod. Barberini gr. 336). The paper gives special attention to the possible use of anointing at the church dedication in the rite of Jerusalem, as it can be reconstructed through the lens of the transmission of this rite in the Armenian, Georgian, and West Syriac traditions. Through the analysis of the extant elements of the hagiopolite rite, I attempt to establish the exact relationship between the rites of consecration of an altar and the deposition of relics, trying to provide a tentative terminus post quem for the use of oil and relics in the dedication of churches in the East. Finally, given the crucial significance of the anointing with oil in the early history of Christian initiation, the paper evaluates the possible influence of the rites of baptism and chrismation upon the evolution of the Eastern Christian rituals for church dedication, particularly in Byzantine tradition.

Alexander Petkas, Princeton University

Justin Martyr's First Apology 55: Cruciform Symbolism

Justin Martyr looks upon a world coruscating with evidence of the Gospel. In his First Apology section 55, he argues that everywhere one looks, the world coruscates with evidence of the Gospel, in the form of "symbols" (symbola). But what, in Justin's mind, are these symbols? and why are the scriptures and the world so constituted as to lend themselves to, even demand, this type of reading? In this paper, I begin with a close philological and literary examination of 1 Apology 55, attempting to answer the first question by analyzing both how and what a 'symbol' symbolizes. One may avoid some misunderstandings by carefully distinguishing between form (schema) and symbol

¶ I then examine the implications of Justin's argument by analyzing its context within 1 Apology. The passage which precedes it insists that mythic stories about the sons of Zeus which resemble the story of Jesus Christ were concocted by demons, intending to deceive with lies which resemble the truth. Along with Justin's logos spermatikos doctrine, this account of scripture's more dangerous audience forms a twofold theory of the derivative nature of pagan culture, which interestingly pivots around the symbol.

¶ Some comparanda from the intellectual context of the early empire throw relief on Justin's symbol and its ideology, and show both Justin's debt to and creative divergence from pagan philosophers' modes of exegeting texts which they perceive to be symbolic (early myth and epic poetry). I close

Alexander Petkas, Princeton University

with brief reflections on Justin's place in the history of exegesis.

Cara Polk, University of Notre Dame

Literacy and Book Use in the Congregations of John Chrysostom

In his work *Ancient Literacy*, William Harris examines Late Antique social and material evidence in an attempt to discover something about the literacy rates of the period. Since Harris does not think the period was characterized by the social structures, ideological commitments, and technological advances necessary for mass literacy, he estimates that no more than 10-15% of the population was literate in Late Antiquity. The sermons of John Chrysostom suggest a higher rate of literacy however, at least among the members of Chrysostom's congregation. This is because Chrysostom offers frequent praise for the activities of reading and studying Scripture. Furthermore, the comments Chrysostom makes reveal that he assumes most people in his congregation could in fact engage in those activities. Finally, a survey of the evidence for book production technology and educational practices in Late Antiquity offer no hindrances to and even more reasons for supposing a rather high rate of literacy among Chrysostom's congregation. In conclusion, when placed in their material and social context, Chrysostom's sermons suggest that Harris' literacy rate estimate is too low in relation to the Christian populations of late fourth- and early fifth-century Antioch and Constantinople. Estimates of 'literacy' levels are also altered by noting that Chrysostom took a broader view of Scriptural literacy than simply the ability to read Biblical texts: For Chrysostom, being Scripturally-literate meant having one's life formed by Scripture, whether one could read it or not.

Dimitrios Porpatonelis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, visiting student at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

The attitude of St. John Chrysostom toward the Emperor

One of most important elements of self-determination of Christian confession is its relationship with state. There are two different, completely opposite, aspects. The first one is the belief that church (as an institution) should be separated from secular authority in order to achieve its spiritual mission. The other one support a more balanced view. It considers that two authorities (secular and spiritual) could co-exist and serve together in the advancement of man. I believe that is very interesting to find out how early Christian thought considered about this relationship and which of two aspects has been adopted. In this survey I chose John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, to be a representative example.

Primarily, I think it is important to be informed about his life. Thus I am going to write a synoptic description of his life. I will take data from church historians, who have been reported at this time, such as Theodoret, Sokrates and Sozomenus. I think it is important for the listener to learn significant facts of his biography. These facts will help him to know better Chrysostom's character and evaluate the reliability of my conclusions.

Then I am going to present some meaningful historical information on political, social and ecclesiastical situation of this period. Furthermore, it is useful to examine what kind of monastic and ascetic contemplation has prevailed in east, and especially in Antioch, the home city of Chrysostom. This examination would help us to understand the personality of Chrysostom and find sources of his ascetical belief. The characteristics of his spirituality are necessary for our estimation of his writings.

Sasha Prevost, Harvard Divinity School

Sasha Prevost, Harvard Divinity School*Saving the Sinful Woman: Women and Holy Weeping in the Syriac Tradition*

Recently holy weeping has become the subject of renewed scholarly interest, from cross-cultural surveys to detailed analyses of Christian theology. For many eastern Christian exegetes, the archetype of religious lamentation remains the weeping woman from Luke's gospel, yet little attention has been paid to the role of spiritual weeping among eastern Christian women. Scholars such as Hannah Hunt have argued that the Eastern theology of *penthos* or *abila* presents a model of personhood which offers a "less misogynistic approach than is found in many contemporary Latin fathers." In this paper I examine several differing anthropologies of women offered by the Syriac tradition: a more positive exploration offered in the exegesis of Luke's "sinful woman," and a more ambivalent portrait reflected in Syriac monastic hagiography.

Commentaries by authors such as Ephrem the Syrian and Jacob of Serugh portray the sinful woman as both a perfect typology for the human soul and an example of harnessing the powers of the female body to holy ends. In contrast, the Lives of Mary, niece of Abraham and Pelagia of Antioch invert this theme. Where Jacob of Serugh wrote daringly that the sinful woman was "a priest for herself who would advocate forgiveness," here female repentance is dependent upon the guidance of a male, monastic role model. Nor is there any sense that anything particular to femaleness or physicality can be utilized in their salvation. It is my hope that attention to these Syriac models will enhance our understanding of gender and anthropology in the Eastern Christian tradition.

Ashley Purpura, Fordham University*HINTING AT HIERARCHY FOR HOLINESS: COMMUNITY ORDER IN BASIL'S LONGER RESPONSES*

Basil of Caesarea's (329-79 CE) ascetic writings provide insight into his own ideals, and those of his contemporaries, for Christian leadership and ecclesial administration. Specifically in the context of communal Christian asceticism, Basil's Longer Responses presents theological justifications for and interpretations of a distinctly ordered and stratified form of community leadership and participation. While it is anachronistic to understand Basil's ordered community structure in the Longer Responses as "hierarchical" in a later post-Dionysian sense, it is equally unfitting to ignore the theological importance Basil attributes to the ordered administration of communal life. Consequently, in this paper I suggest Basil's prescriptions for order in the ascetic community as depicted in the Longer Responses are directly correlated with participation in and acquisition of divine likeness. Basil not only encourages the communal ascetic life and gives instructions regarding it, but also does this in a way that demonstrates the order of the community is necessary for the salvific success of its members. In this paper I argue this interpretation of the Longer Responses by way of two primary discussions: first that Basil depicts order as facilitating the divine life, and second, that the leader of the community functions within the order to lead by way of and toward the likeness of Christ. Through the stratified order of the earthly ascetic community depicted in this text, Basil offers a model for Christian progress towards and participation in the divine reality.

Marcos Ramos, University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto*Salus carnis: The Resurrection of the Flesh in Irenaeus of Lyons*

Marcos Ramos, University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto

The second century of the Christian era is regarded as a period when important controversies arose regarding the tenets of the Christian belief. The process of debate and defense of the Christian tradition against heterodox groups can be seen in its most systematic way during the second century in the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons. Irenaeus used Scripture and tradition to defend the foundations of the faith and specifically the significance of the figure of Christ for the redemption of humankind. This is all part of a soteriology that is based on unity: humanity is created as a unity of material nature and spiritual person as a reflection of the unity of God; this unity of humanity reflects in a particular way the unity of Jesus Christ, true God and true human being. As a result of this, a very relevant aspect of Irenaeus' theology has to do with the salvation of the flesh. This presentation will discuss the concept of *salus carnis* as something essential to the theology of Irenaeus and an important contribution to the development of Christology.

Teva Regule, Boston College

The Baptismal Liturgy described in the Mystagogical Catechesis of Cyril: Formation as Participation

The question of the Anaphoral construction in the baptismal liturgy witnessed by Cyril of Jerusalem in Mystagogical Catechesis V has been one with which liturgical scholars have wrestled in the modern era. Did the Eucharistic prayer include any mention of the economy of the Son, specifically the words of Institution? If not, what might it mean to follow the dominical command, "Do this in remembrance of me?" This paper will revisit these questions. I will begin by situating the Catecheses in the liturgical life of late 4th century Jerusalem. I will then review the theology of imitation of Christ and participation in His life found in the Mystagogical Catecheses. Lastly, I will examine the question of the construction of the Anaphora in the liturgy through the lens of this theology of initiation espoused by the author. From this perspective, I posit that the Anaphora in the Baptismal liturgy found in the fifth Catechesis is described in its entirety (i.e. without any mention of the economy of the Son). Furthermore, I posit that any reference to the Body and Blood of Christ found in the fourth Catechesis refers to the words at the reception of the elements of bread and wine.

Scott Rushing, Baylor University

Ascetic Discipline, Virtue, and Nicene Orthodoxy: The Apostolic Heritage of the Desert Fathers

In a homily on the gospel of Matthew, John Chrysostom claimed that the desert in Egypt had become better than any Paradise, because Christ's kingdom now shone forth in the monastic martyr-virgins. These monks, the foremost of whom was Antony the Great, imitated the zeal of the apostles through their daily cycles of prayer and fasting. In his *Conferences*, John Cassian claimed that after the death of the apostles, the multitudes grew lukewarm and spoiled the "perfection" of the first century Jerusalem church. Only those with apostolic fervor continued in the ascetic philosophy, and they chose to live in the secluded places to continue the teaching handed down by the apostles. Both the coenobitic and anchoritic forms of monasticism represented apostolic perfection.

Chrysostom and Cassian both asserted the apostolic heritage of the desert fathers, despite the fact that these Christian ascetics refused ecclesiastical office and embraced the refuge of the wilderness. Why did these fourth/fifth century patristic writers affirm them as imitators of Christ?

Scott Rushing, Baylor University

Viewing the desert fathers through the lens of the fifth century church historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, I will argue that the monastics met three criteria that confirmed them as inheritors of the apostolic tradition:

1. Ascetic disciplines. Prayer, fasting, and virginity aid in the purification of the body. Years of ascetic disciplines led to the return of the body and soul to the original uncorrupted state of Adam before the Fall.
2. Virtuous conduct. The desert fathers fought to free themselves of the passions by inculcating the virtues in the soul.
3. Affirmation of Nicene orthodoxy. Many of the desert fathers, e.g. Antony the Great and Evagrius Pontus, defended Nicene orthodoxy against a myriad of theological opposition.

Joshua Sales, Boston College

Resolving Hell: Maximus' Eschatology and Apophasis

The Early Church Fathers were no less concerned than we ourselves are today with the tension that an eternal hell and a good God seem to present on a metaphysical dimension. In the first centuries, Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa had attempted a solution to various problems inherent in some of the axioms of theological anthropology, including the freedom of the will, divine sovereignty, and ethical ramifications, one of which was the teaching of hell. There were several fears for Christian theologians in this set of questions, including dualism, cyclical fall and restoration, nihilism, and apokatastasis, loosely linked with what we now term universalism. In the following centuries Origen and Gregory of Nyssa came to be known as what we would now call, anachronistically, universalists. They became so out of fear of the other eschatological options. The question this essay poses is what Maximus the Confessor's eschatology implied for the question of hell--specifically in reference to Origen's and Nyssen's previous contributions. It is the thesis of this essay that Maximus was able to present hell such that it was in every sense real, while removing from it all metaphysical threats it might have posed to the classical Christian teaching of a good God.

Peter Schadler, Oxford University

The Fathers on the Lives of Saints: Narratology as a function of human development in the Life in Christ

The Fathers tell us that we must read the lives of the Saints, but little investigation into why they advise us to do so has been undertaken, and even less has any attempt been made to properly explain why we might be encouraged to read these lives to our children. This paper will attempt to examine patristic incitement to the reading of the lives of the saints in conjunction with contemporary theories of Narratology in an effort to understand why so many Fathers encouraged us to read saints' lives, and whether or not surgical excision is a useful corrective to those lives when modern textual criticism implies that the 'facts' have not been accurately represented in those lives. The paradigm of the fiction/non-fiction dichotomy in the context of the saint's life will be questioned, by arguing that such distinctions fail to appreciate the purpose of the saint's life as a narrative structure that is intentionally constructed to point to an alternate reality, i.e. a life in Christ. Further, as stories that point to an alternate reality, considering the saint's life in the context of children's stories offers surprising conclusions about the nature of that alternate reality, and the extent to which it can be realized in the fallen world.

Peter Schadler, Oxford University

Vasilis Schairer, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

Basil's Political Economy: Toward a Patristic Theory of Wealth & Poverty for Contemporary Society

Basil of Caesarea's contributions to social welfare and philanthropy have been widely examined by theologians and Church historians; yet, scholars have only infrequently examined his importance for contemporary social theory and political economy. As Christians in the Western world grapple with living out Christ's call to love the poor within the framework of a secular liberal democracy, Basil's writings offer a fruitful bed for research on reconciling the two worldviews. The main tension today rests in whether Christians should participate in feeding the poor through a growing governmental regime of welfare programs or whether the only truly Christian approach to social welfare lies in Church-run organizations, individually-based donations, and parish action. This study, then, aims to draw out the main pillars of Basil's socio-economic thought toward answering the question of whether Basil concerned himself primarily with the material condition of the poor (thus allowing welfare transfer programs) or the salvific agency of donation for the donor (thus Church-sponsored and individually-based donation). The paper will examine this question within the framework of Basil's treatises on wealth and poverty, namely his homilies 6, 7, 8 and the homily on Psalm 14. Taken together, I will show that while Basil holds that rich and poor can both benefit from a donor-recipient relationship, his thought is primarily located in the notion that poverty is caused by improper social relations and predatory practices that eradicates God's natural resource-sharing and equality. For Basil, this reality had to be restored through the initiative of individual Christians, Church-run organizations and programs, as well as banning of practices like lending at high interest. As such, the beginnings of a contemporary theology of political economy would include room for both types of poverty relief, as Basil would see no division between society-wide government regulation and programs coupled with individual initiative toward the incarnate and local poor.

Andrew Selby, Baylor University

*How Eastern Trinitarian Theology Went West:
Ambrose of Milan's Selective Use of Sources in De Spiritu Sancto*

Ambrose of Milan struggled with the Homoians, an anti-Nicene group, through the late 370s and the early 380s. The two sides competed for the Emperor Gratian's support, with each writing doctrinal treatises justifying their own theologies to him. The development of Ambrose's Christology in *De fide* in reaction to the stiff opposition of the Homoian party led by Palladius of Ratiara has recently been shown. This paper extends this analysis to Trinitarian theology in *De Spiritu Sancto*.

A reappraisal of Ambrose's treatise on pneumatology is in order since it has often been criticized for deriving heavily from Greek treatises on the same topic, namely Athanasius' *Epistulae ad Serapionem*, Basil of Caesarea's *De Spiritu Sancto*, and Didymus (the Blind) of Alexandria's *De Spiritu Sancto*. While Ambrose did, in fact, borrow a fair portion of his treatise's arguments, he likely selected from these in respect to his polemic against the Homoians. Since Homoian theology subordinated Son to Father and Spirit to Son, Ambrose had to use arguments that would demonstrate the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Son and the Father. Thus, Ambrose employed with greatest prominence and frequency the principle that the divine persons were one on the basis of the same operations in salvation history, an axiom occurring most often in Didymus as opposed to Basil or Athanasius. This tactic provided a difficult challenge to Homoian hermeneutics, since their habit was to identify different substances in the diversity of divine

Andrew Selby, Baylor University

operations.

Christos Strubakos, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

Gregory of Nazianzus' Trinitarian Theology: A Study in Platonic Metaphysics and Christian Asceticism

Gregory of Nazianzus is most famous for his eloquent Theological Orations in which he considers the nature of the Holy Trinity. In more recent years, scholarship has also been directed towards his Festal Orations. This research reveals that Gregory, as a master of words, seamlessly unites Classic rhetoric and philosophy with Christian asceticism. In my paper I shall argue that in addition to alluding to other works of Classical literature and utilizing rhetorical techniques, Gregory assumes literary and philosophical themes and reworks them in a Christian context. I shall focus on Oration 39, On the Lights and will demonstrate that Gregory takes on and adapts both diction and themes from Plato's Symposium and Christianizes them in the context of his homily on the feast of Epiphany. In particular, Gregory focuses on three of the Symposium's metaphysical arguments regarding Eros, the life of philosophy, and human immortality as achieved through interpersonal relationships. I will argue that Gregory encourages his audience to compare his homily to Plato's "Symposium" by embedding Platonic expression, philosophy, and mythology throughout the oration. Then I will show how Gregory reworks the three themes of Eros, philosophy and immortality through human interaction, and coalesces them in a Christian's participation in the life of the Church, and more precisely, in the life of the Trinity. Thus, this study will shed new light on Gregory's intimate knowledge of Classical literature, and his ability to holistically incorporate Pagan literature and metaphysics into both his Trinitarian model and his practical exhortations for the Christian life.

Lee Sytsma, Marquette University

Reading between the lines of Origen's anti-deterministic exegesis: evidence for an early catholic tradition of predestination

The view that a predestinarian reading of Paul is not found in the early church until the time of Augustine and his near-contemporaries has become a virtual truism in scholarship today. For example, in one of the leading works on the history of justification Alistair McGrath feels safe in writing that "the pre-Augustinian theological tradition is practically of one voice in asserting the freedom of the human will." There are two main reasons for this absence. First, the Church was not forced to handle doctrines of grace and free will with any sort of precision until the Pelagian controversy. Second, in the first several centuries AD church leaders were heavily engaged in polemical debates against a broad array of deterministic philosophies and therefore their primary focus was understandably placed on the freedom of the will. This paper will revisit the theological commonplace that in the pre-Augustinian era a deterministic reading of Paul is absent. Specifically, I will argue that such a tradition did exist, and that this tradition was inside the church catholic - it was distinct from the heretical Gnostic groups who received so much negative attention by church leaders. Exegetical and polemical writings by Origen will provide a window into this tradition.

Sarah Teets, University of Colorado, Boulder

Christianus esse et fieri: Augustine's Confessions and the (Re)reading of Christian Identity

Sarah Teets, University of Colorado, Boulder

The tendency to impute anachronistic modern constructions of religious terms and practices to “upstream” ancient Christian texts is a frequent problem for the reading of these texts. In the case of Augustine’s *Confessions*, this tendency affects a reading by which the Milan garden scene of Book VIII demonstrates a conversion according to the modern Protestant/ Evangelical paradigm, understood as a “moment of belief” which transforms one’s totality and revolutionizes one’s identity. A close reading of Books VII and VIII of the *Confessions* reveals that Augustine does not construct his narrative of conversion nor draw the lines of demarcation between Christian/not-Christian according to this paradigm. Augustine does not consider Christian “being or becoming,” i.e. identity or conversion, to hinge on belief, but rather to be a process comprising three elements: doctrinal belief, renunciation of sexuality, and initiation into the Church through the rites of baptism. Thus the garden scene represents a dramatic climax in which Augustine achieves his decision to renounce his sexuality, but he does not take it to amount to a Christian identity (in his own sense) or a conversion (in the Protestant/Evangelical sense). Given the current culture of Protestant/Evangelical American Christianity, which so often engages in an oppressive and exclusionary discourse of identifying who is and is not included among Christians, there is value, by such a re-reading of an important early Christian text, in displaying the historical non-continuity of the frontiers of identity, and thus suggesting the malleability of the current frontiers.

Tenny Thomas, Union Theological Seminary

‘Theme of Healing’ in the Thought of Ephrem the Syrian

Through this paper I hope to touch upon the ‘theme of healing’ in Ephrem’s writings.

I will look at Ephrem’s notion of salvation history as a process of healing. For Ephrem the fall brought humankind into a state of suffering and pain. In Ephrem’s analysis, there are two agents that cause sin and sickness – external and internal. The external is the Evil One (Satan) and the internal is one’s freewill. In the beginning, sin persuaded human history through disobedience. The fruit was offered by the serpent to Eve and then to Adam and thereby the serpent led the inhabitants of Paradise to sin. Thus, the poisonous advice of the Evil One instigated the Fall of Adam and Eve. Satan offered the “poison” which brought humankind into the “state of sickness.”

For Ephrem Christ, the “Medicine of Life” is the only way to achieve a perfect cure. Ephrem portrays Jesus as the Medicine of life in the light of incarnation. Ephrem says, “He is the healer of everything who came down from heaven as the ‘medicine of life’ to heal humanity from its state of sickness.” Jesus Christ granted perfect healing and restoration to humanity. Jesus’ passion, Cross, His garment, His word and hand contributed to the healing. Jesus, the ‘Medicine of life’ and the ‘Physician’, has been sent to bring about the restoration of humanity. At the last supper, Jesus Christ offered Himself in the form of bread and wine as against the poison offered by the Evil One. Thus, bread and wine (His Body and Blood) became the medicine of life. Christ’s healing ministry has not ceased with Him, but continues with His disciples and the sacraments of the Church through priesthood.

Michael Tishel, University of Thessaloniki

The Use of the Ontological Distinction of the Created and Uncreated Natures in the Writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa

The Church Fathers throughout the centuries whenever they spoke of God’s relationship with His creation consistently upheld and strove never to confuse the ontological distinction between the Uncreated and the created natures. This stood in contrast to the limited Platonic division of reality

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into the intelligible and sensible worlds; they argued that God cannot be put on the level of the angels (intelligible), and so, being uncreated in nature, He exists above both the intelligible and sensible (created) worlds. The Bible presents the story of the Creation ex nihilo and the subsequent interactions but clear distinction between the Divine and that which is created. St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 A.D.) in building both on the biblical tradition and on his predecessors and contemporaries in the faith (namely St. Basil the Great among others), uses the philosophical terminology and categories of his day while still upholding the Gospel message that the creation is limited by its nature, while the Creator is "bounded only by infinity." This paper will examine Gregory's use of this ontological distinction in his treatises against the Eunomians as well as some other works, especially as it uses a 'baptized' manifestation of the Platonic categories of intelligible and sensible worlds, dividing reality instead into three natures: "the intelligible, uncreated; the created, intelligible; and the created, sensible." // *Contra Eu.* PG 45, 933A.

Weiswurm, A. *The Nature of Human Knowledge According to St. G of Nyssa.* p. 37.

Alexis Torrance, Oxford University*Perpetual Progress and Eternal Rest: Assessing the Normativity of Epektasis*

For many modern theologians, the concept of epektasis ('straining', or often 'perpetual progress')—ascribed mainly to St. Gregory of Nyssa, and in a more refined way to St Maximus the Confessor—provides the basic key for understanding the Greek patristic and consequently modern Orthodox doctrine of perfection. The human being, having attained holiness, rises eternally 'from glory to glory' in a ceaseless, ever-increasing intimacy and unity with God. However, both the precise nature of epektasis, as well as the degree to which it is representative of the Greek patristic tradition, are matters of debate. Two broad points will be made and developed here: first, special care must be taken to delineate patristic texts which clearly allude to 'continual ascent' or 'perpetual progress' in the eternal state, and those which apply such language only (and perhaps exclusively) to the struggles of the Christian here below. Second, sufficient attention must be given to those texts which speak, after the manner of passages such as 1 John 3:2 ('we shall see him as he is'), of perfection and deification in terms of an integral and full divinization, the assimilation of the whole divine life in its completeness (without recourse to the language of 'eternal progress'). By addressing these two understudied points, this paper aims to further the discussion of Greek patristic and Orthodox models of perfection and deification, and in doing so, to warn against some of the possible pitfalls that go with too hastily attributing an epektasis model to the whole patristic and Orthodox tradition.

Petros Toulis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*The concept of creation according to the Fathers*

In this paper we will try to present the idea and the Theology of the creation according to the major fathers of the Orthodox Church. We will start with the relationship between the Trinitarian Dogma and the notion of creation, because the Arian controversy was the cause of the first discussions about creation. Then, we will present the conditions of the creation "out of nothing" (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) that is the distinction between the divine Essence of God and His divine Energies, the absolute Freedom of God and His ultimate Love in relationship with His Omnipotence according to the Fathers, who opposed to Origen and his theories. Reconstructing the ideas of Origen, we will try to discover the concept of time in the creation. Our goal is to present the consensus of the Fathers in that major dogma of the Church and to give a patristic answer to some Scholastic theologians who discussed the possibility of an "eternal creation" (e.g.

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Thomas Aquinas).

Xueying Wang, University of Notre Dame

The Bride as a Leader of the Church: Ecclesial elements in Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs

It is generally agreed that in the exegesis of Gregory of Nyssa, the focus of the interpretation of the Song of Songs shifted from the ecclesial union to individual union with God. Johannes Quasten perhaps spoke for many when he observed that while Hippolytus and Origen interpreted the Song as signifying the relationship between Christ (the bridegroom) and the Church (the bride), Gregory envisaged the Song as referring to the relationship between the individual soul and God; the ecclesiastical aspect, however, is relegated to a minor role. One reason for this impression is that the Commentary on the Song of Songs was written at around the same time with the Life of Moses, which is often considered as a description of the soul's solitary journey towards God. Thus it is not surprising that the mystical union between God and the individual soul in the Commentary on the Song tends to attract scholarly attention.

The ecclesial aspect in Gregory's exegesis of the Song, however, deserves more attention than it has received. Besides exploring the theme of solitude of the bride's spiritual journey in light of the Life of Moses, another way of reading these two works together, I believe, is to stress on the ecclesial elements in the Commentary on the Song that are missing in the Life of Moses. I argue that the accounts of the interaction between the bride and her companions (the "daughters of Jerusalem") in the Song become occasions for Gregory to emphasize the role of the Church in individual spiritual ascent. The bride expresses "an ecclesiastical concern" at every stage of her ascent to God by sharing her own experiences with her companions, and exhorting them to make progress in their spiritual journey. In this paper, my goal is to deepen the understanding of the union of the individual soul with God by demonstrating that, for Gregory, the divine union with God takes place in the Church.