

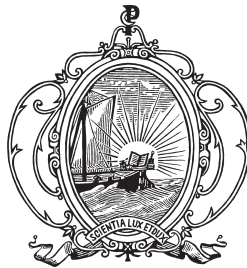
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Table of Contents

ASCETICA

Kate WILKINSON, Baltimore, USA Gender Roles and Mental Reproduction among Virgins	3
David WOODS, Cork, Ireland Rome, Gregoria, and Madaba: A Warning against Sexual Temptation	9
Alexis C. TORRANCE, Princeton, USA The Angel and the Spirit of Repentance: Hermas and the Early Monastic Concept of <i>Metanoia</i>	15
Lois FARAG, St Paul, MN, USA Heroines not Penitents: Saints of Sex Slavery in the <i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i> in Roman Law Context	21
Nienke VOS, Amsterdam, The Netherlands Seeing <i>Hesychia</i> : Appeals to the Imagination in the <i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i>	33
Peter TÓTH, London, UK 'In volumine Longobardo': New Light on the Date and Origin of the Latin Translation of St Anthony's Seven Letters.....	47
Kathryn HAGER, Oxford, UK John Cassian: The Devil in the Details.....	59
Liviu BARBU, Cambridge, UK Spiritual Fatherhood in and outside the Desert: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective	65

LITURGICA

T.D. BARNES, Edinburgh, UK The First Christmas in Rome, Antioch and Constantinople	77
Gerard ROUWHORST, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands Eucharistic Meals East of Antioch	85

Anthony GELSTON, Durham, UK A Fragmentary Sixth-Century East Syrian Anaphora	105
Richard BARRETT, Bloomington, Indiana, USA 'Let Us Put Away All Earthly Care': Mysticism and the <i>Cherubikon</i> of the Byzantine Rite	111

ORIENTALIA

B.N. WOLFE, Oxford, UK The Skeireins: A Neglected Text	127
Alberto RIGOLIO, Oxford, UK From 'Sacrifice to the Gods' to the 'Fear of God': Omissions, Additions and Changes in the Syriac Translations of Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius	133
Richard VAGGIONE, OHC, Toronto, Canada Who were Mani's 'Greeks'? 'Greek Bread' in the <i>Cologne Mani Codex</i>	145
Flavia RUANI, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, France Between Myth and Exegesis: Ephrem the Syrian on the Manichaean <i>Book of Giants</i>	155
Hannah HUNT, Leeds, UK 'Clothed in the Body': The Garment of Flesh and the Garment of Glory in Syrian Religious Anthropology	167
Joby PATERUPARAMPIL, Leuven, Belgium <i>Regula Fidei</i> in Ephrem's <i>Hymni de Fide LXVII</i> and in the <i>Sermones</i> <i>de Fide IV</i>	177
Jeanne-Nicole SAINT-LAURENT, Colchester, VT, USA Humour in Syriac Hagiography	199
Erik W. KOLB, Washington, D.C., USA 'It Is With God's Words That Burn Like a Fire': Monastic Discipline in Shenoute's Monastery	207
Hugo LUNDHAUG, Oslo, Norway Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt: Shenoute of Atripe and the Nag Hammadi Codices	217

Aho SHEMUNKASHO, Salzburg, Austria Preliminaries to an Edition of the Hagiography of St Aho the Stranger (ܐܚܘ ܫܝܡܘܢܟܐܫܘ)	229
Peter BRUNS, Bamberg, Germany Von Magiern und Mönchen – Zoroastrische Polemik gegen das Christentum in der armenischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung.....	237
Grigory KESSEL, Marburg, Germany New Manuscript Witnesses to the ‘Second Part’ of Isaac of Nineveh	245

CRITICA ET PHILOLOGICA

Michael PENN, Mount Holyoke College, USA Using Computers to Identify Ancient Scribal Hands: A Preliminary Report	261
Felix ALBRECHT, Göttingen, Germany A Hitherto Unknown Witness to the Apostolic Constitutions in Uncial Script.....	267
Nikolai LIPATOV-CHICHERIN, Nottingham, UK, and St Petersburg, Russia Preaching as the Audience Heard it: Unedited Transcripts of Patristic Homilies	277
Pierre AUGUSTIN, Paris, France Entre codicologie, philologie et histoire: La description de manuscrits parisiens (<i>Codices Chrysostomici Graeci VII</i>)	299
Octavian GORDON, București, Romania Denominational Translation of Patristic Texts into Romanian: Elements for a Patristic Translation Theory	309

characterised by the practice of editing the text through significant additions and omissions.⁴

In his Syriac translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* Sergius mostly adhered to his resolution.⁵ Not only did Sergius compose a remarkably literal translation in contrast to the freer standard of only few decades earlier,⁶ but he also strove to translate what he thought was Aristotle's exposition in its entirety, including references to pagan mythology and Greek literature. Yet, the two aspects, literal translation and complete rendering of the original text, are not always coincidental. The present paper ventures into the relation between translation and adaptation by offering a preliminary analysis of four Syriac translations of Greek secular texts. Despite being contemporary or almost contemporary to Sergius, the works were not transmitted with the same care for entirety that Sergius showed in the above mentioned *De mundo*. Indeed, the significant additions, omissions and changes, which mostly affect the references to Greek culture, can be interpreted as the result of deliberate agency.

The Syriac translations of works by Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius are characterised by frequent omissions and – less frequent – additions to their originals, and, accordingly, they look very much as adaptations. Those of which the Greek text has survived, thus allowing the comparison with the originals, are:

Plutarch	<i>De cohibenda ira</i> (Mor. 29) ⁷	PI
Plutarch	<i>De capienda ex inimicis utilitate</i> (Mor. 6) ⁸	PU
Lucian	<i>De calumniis</i> (13) ⁹	LC
Themistius	<i>De amicitia</i> (Or. 22) ¹⁰	TA

⁴ Possibly including his own adaptation of a treatise by Alexander of Aphrodisias, see Daniel King, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On the principles of the universe* in its Syriac adaptation', *Le Muséon* 123 (2010), 159-91.

⁵ I am very grateful to Adam McCollum for his unpublished doctoral dissertation on the Syriac *De mundo*.

⁶ Daniel King, *The Syriac Versions of the Writings of Cyril of Alexandria* (Leuven, 2008), 361-88; David Taylor, 'Early translations from the ancient Orient: from Greek into Syriac', in Harald Kittel *et al.* (eds), *Übersetzung: Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung* (Berlin, 2004), 1190-3; Sebastian Brock, 'Towards a history of Syriac translation technique', in René Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum, 1980 (Goslar 7-11 September 1980): les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures* (Rome, 1983), 1-14.

⁷ MS *Sinaiticus* syr. S. Catherin. 16 (VII cent.); BM *Add.* 17209 (IX cent.). Edition in P. de Lagarde, *Analecta Syriaca* (1858), 186-95 from BM *Add.* 17209. For the Sinai manuscript see Bernard Pouderon *et al.* (eds), *Aristide, Apologie* (Paris, 2003), 137, and Agnes Smith Lewis, *Catalogue of the Syriac mss. in the Convent of S. Catharine on Mount Sinai* (London, 1894), 18; for the BM manuscript see William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since the Year 1838* (London, 1870-72), III 1185-7 (mii).

⁸ MS *Sinaiticus* syr. S. Catherin. 16. Edition in Eberhard Nestle (ed.), *A tract of Plutarch on the Advantage to Be derived from one's Enemies (De capienda ex inimicis utilitate), the Syriac Version edited from a ms. on Mount Sinai* (London, 1894).

⁹ MS *Sinaiticus* syr. S. Catherin. 16; BM *Add.* 17209. Edition in Eduard Sachau (ed.), *Inedita Syriaca. Eine Sammlung syrischer Übersetzungen von Schriften griechischer Profanliteratur* (Halle, 1870), 1-16 from BM *Add.* 17209.

¹⁰ BM *Add.* 17209. Edition in E. Sachau, *Inedita Syriaca* (1870), 48-65.

The pieces were probably translated into Syriac during the fifth or the early sixth century, as it is possible to judge from their language and from the relatively free translation technique.¹¹ The unit of translation ranges from the paragraph to the sentence (in an approximate scale from the least to the most literal: *PI TA PU LC*), thus favouring the hypothesis of diverse authorship and chronology.

The works are structured around pieces of moral advice. *PI* shows how important it is to constrain anger and it provides recommendations on how to defeat it; *PU* reminds the reader that the reproaches coming from enemies should be taken as exhortations to adopt and stick to a morally sound behaviour; *LC* describes the functioning of slander and it offers tips on how to avoid succumbing to it; and *TA* is concerned with leading an upright conduct towards friends, who are always vulnerable to become victims of slander. The works share a similar structure in that they mostly elaborate the moral advice around series of *exempla*. The edifying recommendations are inserted in a framework of authority which is provided by the exemplar or conversely deplorable behaviours of figures mostly belonging to the Graeco-Roman world. Usually the protagonists of the anecdotes are philosophers, historical personalities or mythological figures.

It is in the approach to such *exempla* that the Syriac adaptors often resorted to omit passages of the original texts. An example is provided by Chapter Five of Plutarch's *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, in fact a series of anecdotes, which is worth reporting in full:¹²

Greek text

[5] a. Whenever **Plato** was among men who behaved unseemly, while leaving he used to say to himself: 'can it be that I am like them?' If the man who reviles the way of life of another man looked at once at his own and readjusted it by redirecting (it) and turning (it) into the opposite direction, he would possess something useful from (his) reviling. Otherwise it seems, and also is, useless and empty.

Syriac translation

[5] a. When **Plato** saw men who were worthy of reproach, after leaving them he used to say: 'may I not become such (as they)!' Therefore, anyone who reproaches his fellow man, if he looks (also) into himself when he turns to (reproaching his) equal, is helped by the very reproach he makes, even if (the reproach) is injurious.

¹¹ Respectively Anton Baumstark, 'Lucubrationes Syro-Graecae', *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie*, Suppl. 21 (1894), 353-524, 413-22, who based his analysis on *PI TA LC*; and Sebastian Brock, 'Syriac translations of Greek popular philosophy', in Peter Bruns (ed.), *Von Athen nach Bagdad. Zur Rezeption griechischer Philosophie von der Spätantike bis zum Islam* (Bonn, 2003), 9-28, 16.

¹² *PU* 88D-89B: 8.1-9.5. The Greek text is from Hans Gärtner *et al.* (eds), *Plutarchi Moralia*, vol. I (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1993).

b. Most people laugh when someone who is bald and hunchbacked reviles and mocks others for these things, for it is completely ridiculous to revile and mock with something which can be used as an insult in turn (against you).

c. As **Leo of Byzantium**, who was reviled for the weakness of his eyes by a hunchbacked man, said: ‘you reproach me for a human condition, when you bear (God’s) retribution on your back.’ Therefore, do not revile an adulterer if you are mad after boys, or a profligate one if you are stingy.

d. ‘You were born of the same kind as the woman who killed her husband’ (is what) **Alcmeon** said to **Adrastus**. How did **Adrastus** (reply) then? By making a reproach which was not another’s but his own: ‘and yourself (are) the killer of (your) mother who gave you birth.’

e. **Domitius** (said) to **Crassus**: ‘didn’t you weep when the sea-eel that was kept for you in the fish-pond died?’ and the other [*i.e.* **Crassus**] answered: ‘Didn’t you bury three wives without shedding a tear?’

f. Whoever is reproaching does not have to be naturally clever, loud-voiced and aggressive, but (he has to be) irreproachable and blameless.

g. It seems that God commanded ‘know yourself!’ to nobody so much as to someone who is about to blame another, lest, by saying what they want (to say), they hear what they do not want to (hear). According to **Sophocles**, someone like that ‘when uttering words in vain, is used to hearing unwillingly the words that he willingly speaks’.

b. Nonetheless many people laugh when they see a man who, being bald or hunchbacked, reviles others for these infirmities, for many fools reproach someone with something which turns back to them.

c. **Leo**, when he was called (108r ii) blind by a hunchbacked man, answered: ‘you have reproached me for a defect of the body, but you carry your (own) defects on your shoulders.’ So, do not call your fellow man ‘adulterer’, when you are impure, or ‘presumptuous’ when you are execrable.

d.

e. **Domitius** wanted to reproach **Crassus**, who, when the animal that was kept for him in a cage died, wept about it. **Crassus** told him this: ‘may I not be like you, who buried the three wives you had and shed tears for none of them.’

f. A man does not have to be excellent in order to insult, and be impudent and raise his voice, but, when he reproaches, he should not give any room for the reproach to be sent back to him.

g. God also demands from (someone) who wants (108v i) to reproach his fellow man, that he first observes his (own) person, in case, when he says what pleases himself, he hears what is not agreeable for himself, as his ears perceive unwillingly what his mouth sent out willingly.

The passage shows that the anecdotes about Plato (**a**), Leo of Byzantium (**c**) and Domitius with Crassus (**e**) are regularly found in translation, while the one about Alcmeon and Adrastus, which is drawn from Greek tragedy, is entirely

omitted (**d**). As it will be shown, the incidence of the omissions of *exempla* can be put in relation with their contents. Similarly, the reference to Sophocles is omitted (**g**), although Sophocles' quotation is readapted into the text. The present analysis, however, is limited to the treatment of the *exempla*, which are intended in a rather inclusive way, and it will not comprehend the rendering of quotations.¹³

Additionally, some of the anecdotes that survive in Syriac have been modified, usually by substituting the proper name of the main character with a generic one. For instance, the anecdotes that have philosophers as protagonists survive entirely in Syriac, but they sometime attest a generalization of proper names (in *italics*):

	<i>Greek text</i>	<i>Syriac translation</i>
<i>PI</i>	Socrates 455A	<i>A wise man</i> 188.5
	Plato 456D	Plato 189.20
	Diogenes 460E	Diogenes 193.25
	Arcesilaus 461D	<i>A philosopher</i> 194.15
	Socrates and Xanthippe 461D	<i>Socrates and his wife</i> 194.20
<i>PU</i>	Diogenes and Crates 87A	Diogenes and Crates 3.15
	Zeno 87A	Zeno 3.15
	Diogenes 88A	Diogenes 6.15
	Plato 88E	Plato 8.1
	Socrates and Xanthippe 90D	<i>Socrates and the wife</i> 13.10
	Pythagoras 91C	<i>One of the philosophers</i> 15.10
<i>LC</i>	Demetrius and the wine 16	Demetrius and the wine 10.15
	Socrates 29	Socrates 15.5
<i>TA</i>	n/a	n/a

As a result, the proper names of some philosophers mentioned in the text have been changed, and, for instance, Socrates becomes 'a wise man', Arcesilaus becomes 'a philosopher' and Pythagoras becomes 'one of the philosophers'. Nonetheless, all the *exempla* based on philosophers and on their conduct have been preserved in Syriac.

Instead, the treatment of *exempla* based on historical figures attests not only generalizations of proper names, but also omissions:

	<i>Greek text</i>	<i>Syriac translation</i>
<i>PI</i>	Thebans and Spartans 454C	omitted
	Callisthenes and Alexander 454E	omitted
	Xerxes 455D	<i>a Persian king</i> 188.20

¹³ Quotations are mostly omitted.

- Spartans and Helots 455E
 Gaius Gracchus 456A
 Ctesiphon and a mule 457A
 king Antigonus 457E
 Arcadion and Philip 457E
 Philip 457F¹⁴
 Magas and Philemon 458A
 Ptolemy and Peleus 458A
 Alexander and Porus 458B
 Philip in Olynthus 458C
 A Rhodian and a servant 458D
 Agatocles 458E
 Antigonus 458F
 Satyrus the Samian 459A
 Phocion and the Athenians 459E
 Tyrrhenian slaves 460C
 Marius 461E
 Nero and Seneca 461F
- PU* Chilon 86C
 Xenophon 86E
 Nasica 88A
 Leo of Byzantium 88F
 Domitius and Crassus 89A
 Thessalian Prometheus
 (Jason of Pherae) 89C
 Lacydes king of the Argives 89E
 Pompey 89E
 Crassus and a (Vestal) Virgin 89E
 Postumia 89E
 Themistocles and Pausanias 89F
 Hiero 90B
 Caesar and Pompey 91A
 Scaurus and Domitius 91D
 Cato and Murena 91D
 Demos in Chios 91F
 Themistocles and Miltiades 92C
- LC* Apelles and Ptolemy 2
 Solon and Dracon 8
 Alexander and Hephaestion 17
 Aristides and Themistocles 27
 Themistocles and Miltiades 29
- TA* Chabrias and Iphicrates 271A
- omitted**
a wise man 189.5
 Ctesiphon and a mule 190.5
 king Antigonus 190.20
omitted
a king 190.25
omitted
a king and a philosopher 190.25
Alexander and the king of the Indians 191.1
Philip in an illustrious city 191.5
omitted
omitted
 Antigonus 191.15
omitted
a wise man and the Athenians 192.25
omitted
omitted
Nero and a man 195.5
 Chilon 1.10
 Xenophon 1.15
a wise man 6.10
Leo 8.10
 Domitius and Crassus 8.15
a man 10.1
the king of Argos 11.1
 Pompey 11.1
 Crassus and a virgin 11.5
 Postumia 11.5
 Themistocles and Pausanias 11.10
 Hiero 12.5
Caesar and his enemy Pompey 14.5¹⁵
 Scaurus and Domitius 15.15
omitted
Demos in his city 16.10
 Themistocles and Miltiades 17.10
 Apelles and Ptolemy 2.5
 Solon and Dracon 5.20
 Alexander and Hephaestion 10.20
 Aristides and Themistocles 14.25
 Themistocles and Miltiades 15.10
omitted

¹⁴ Here Philip is not mentioned explicitly.

¹⁵ The Syriac adds *ܫܠܘܢܝܘܬܗ* 'his enemy'.

As opposed to the anecdotes based on philosophers, which all survive in Syriac, those based on historical personalities from the Graeco-Roman world have been omitted on a number of occasions. At the same time, the adaptors may have had access to some knowledge of the identity of the figures, as it is evident in their correct rendering of Arcesilaus and Pythagoras (philosophers), Xerxes ('a Persian king') and Porus ('the king of the Indians'), since such information would not be otherwise available within the text.

The tendency to omit entire passages becomes more frequent in the rendering of *exempla* drawn from Greek mythology and literature:

<i>Greek text</i>	<i>Syriac translation</i>
<i>PI</i> Helen and Electra 454D	omitted
Achilles and Agamemnon 455A	omitted
Thamyris and Pandarus 455D	any reference to the characters is omitted
Athena 456B	omitted
Marsia 456B	<i>a musician</i> 189.10
Sophocles 458D	omitted
Sophocles 460D	omitted
Agamemnon 460E	omitted
<i>PU</i> A satyr and Prometheus 86F	omitted
Alcmeon and Adrastus 88F	omitted
Telephus' wound 89C	Telephus' wound 9.15
Merope 90A	Merope 11.20
<i>LC</i> Labdacus and Pelops 1	omitted
Anteia and Bellerophon 26	omitted
Phaedra and Hippolytos 26	omitted
Palamedes 28	Palamedes 15.5
Homer's sirens 30	Homer's sirens 15.15
<i>TA</i> Achilles and Patroclus 266A	<i>Achilles and his friend</i> 50.5
Strophius' son [<i>i.e.</i> Pylades] and Orestes 269A	<i>Orestes' friend and his friend</i> 53.10 ¹⁶
Sthenelus and Diomedes 271B	omitted
Hippolytos 277D	omitted
Orestes 278C	omitted
Aesop 278C	Aesop 64.10
Scylla 279B	omitted
Heracles at the crossroads 280A	omitted

As a result, most of the mythological references are removed. The occurrence of the omissions is not entirely systematic, but overall, while 'philosophical'

¹⁶ The identification of Pylades as Orestes' friend is not available within the text, although it may have been derived from the context.

anecdotes were entirely reported, ‘mythological’ anecdotes were mostly omitted. The popularity of the anecdote of the Homeric sirens may have been a reason for its survival here, as it may have been the case for Aesop’s fable.¹⁷

The Syriac translations of our works are very much configured as adaptations, and they are far away from the entirety of the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* in Sergius’ translation, where even ornamental references to Greek mythology have precise equivalents in Syriac.¹⁸ Moreover, the fierceness towards the mythological anecdotes of our works seems to reciprocate another set of omissions that characterise the Syriac pieces, namely those targeting the references to pagan religion. In this respect, the omissions are systematic, and they affect interjections such as ‘by Zeus’ and ‘by Heracles,’¹⁹ the references to ‘gods’²⁰ and the passages that more extensively refer to pagan religion.²¹

The hypothesis of a deliberate Christianizing agenda may help explain both the consistent omission of references to pagan religion and the selective rendering of the *exempla*. With few exceptions, while Greek mythology may have sounded problematic within a Christianised moralizing text, in the same context the upright – and not rarely ascetic – conduct of philosophers may have been more welcome. Also, a hint to a Christianizing agency seems to emerge from a Syriac interpolation in *TA*. The passage deals with slander, and, through an allusion, the Syriac adaptor disclosed his familiarity with an image from *Psalms* 106 (107):²²

ἀλλὰ φιλίας ἐχθρότατον τε φύσει καὶ
ἐπιβουλότατον ὑπὲρ τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ ὄπου

ܠܬܘܫܒܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ
ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ

¹⁷ Maria Conterno, ‘Retorica pagana e cristianesimo orientale: la traduzione siriana dell’orazione *περὶ φιλίας* di Temistio’, *Annali di Scienze Religiose* n.s. 3 (2010), 161-88, 181.

¹⁸ References not strictly necessary for the argumentation include a mention of the mythological Aloadae (391A: 135.8), a quotation from Homer (397B: 150.3-5) and an Orphic passage (401A: 157.15-8).

¹⁹ *LC* 14; *LC* 31; *PI* 455D; *PI* 459C.

²⁰ *PI* 455D; *TA* 267A.

²¹ *PI* 458B: ‘For this reason, I believe, they call the king of the gods “Meilichios” (“the mild one”) while the Athenians call him “Maimaktes” (“the boisterous one”), but punishment is a matter of the Erynnis and of the *daimones*, not of the divine or of the Olympian.’ *TA* 267D: ‘Let us pray, you and I, to the Homeric Athena, that, so to say, she should dissolve the thick mist from (our) eyes, so that we may distinguish not a god from a man in the battles, but true friendship from the fictitious one.’

²² *TA* 277D-278A: 63.11-8. A similar expression is attested in two verses respectively from the *Psalms* and from *Isaiah*: *Ps.* 107:15: ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ‘for He broke open doors of brass and he cut bars of iron’; and *Isa.* 45:2: ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܗܘ ‘I will go before you and I will make the rugged places smooth; I will break down doors of brass, I will cut bars of iron’. The following verse in *Isaiah* (45:3) may justify another change in the Syriac *TA*: ‘Darius’ gold’ (266A) becomes in Syriac ‘Cyrus’ gold’ (50.4), where Cyrus is a more relevant figure than Darius in the Old Testament, and he is twice mentioned in relation to treasures (*Isa.* 45:1-3; *Ezra* 1:7-11); see M. Conterno, ‘Retorica pagana e cristianesimo orientale’ (2010), 175-6.

ἂν αἰσθηται αὐτὴν εὐπραγοῦσαν, ἥρέμα
εἰσοκισαμένη κατὰ σμικρὸν ὑπορύττει
καὶ ἐλέγγχει τὸν ἄφρακτὸν τε καὶ ἀσθενῆ.

ܩܠܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐ
ܕܩܘܪܒܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐ
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but (slander) is by nature the most hostile to
friendship and the most treacherous of all
things; and, wherever it perceives a flourish-
ing friendship, it softly establishes itself
there, (and) little by little it undermines and
gets the better of the unguarded and weak
person.

but slander happens to friends more than all
(other) injuries. For wherever slanderers per-
ceive that friendship is flourishing and strong,
they attack quietly and without tumult, *they
noiselessly dig with the tip of their fingers
and they scratch, but shortly afterwards they
use bars of brass and of iron*, until they
knock over from its foundation that friend-
ship which was previously flourishing.

The expansion (in *italics*) serves the purpose of emphasizing how subtle and destructive the action of slander can be, and the reference to the biblical bars of iron might have been a straightforward image for the Syriac readership that the adaptor was expecting for his work.²³

To sum up, the changes so far analysed show that the Syriac *PI TA PU LC* look very much like Christian adaptations of pieces of Greek pagan literature, where those references to pagan religion that could not be easily readapted, for instance through the change of 'gods' into 'God'²⁴ or of μάντιες 'seers' into ܩܘܪܒܐ 'prophet',²⁵ have been consistently removed from the texts. This practice contrasts with other early (and thus generally free) Syriac translations from Greek, where the references to pagan mythology nonetheless survive. Apart from the already mentioned Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo*, they include the *Apology* by Aristides,²⁶ the *Oratio ad Graecos* attributed to Justin²⁷ – both by Christian authors who openly condemn pagan religion and mythology –, and the Syriac translation of the pseudo-Nonnos' *Mythological Scholia*.²⁸

²³ For the popularity of the Biblical expression see Sebastian Brock, 'The gates/bars of Sheol revisited', in William L. Petersen *et al.* (eds), *Sayings of Jesus: canonical and non-canonical. Essays in honour of Tjitze Baarda* (Leiden, 1997), 7-24.

²⁴ *LC* 5 and 8. 'Gods' remained in the plural form in the negative *exempla* about Alexander (*LC* 18-9) and about the Athenians condemning Socrates (*LC* 29).

²⁵ *TA* 267A: 51.7.

²⁶ The Syriac translation dates back to the fourth or fifth centuries and it was edited by B. Pouderon, *Aristide, Apologie* (2003).

²⁷ The Syriac translation dates back to the fourth or fifth centuries and it was edited by Bernard Pouderon *et al.* (eds), *Ouvrages apologétiques. Pseudo-Justin* (Paris, 2009).

²⁸ The earlier Syriac translation dates back to the early sixth century and it was edited by Sebastian Brock (ed.), *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Scholia* (Cambridge, 1971).

The omissions and additions in our texts seem to respond to particular concerns of the adaptors, and primarily Christianization. Indeed, their agency raises questions about the milieu of destination for such works, perhaps a Christian environment that was willing to read pieces of moral advice written by Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius,²⁹ but was unwilling to accept without reservation the pagan (and literary) framework of authority in which the edifying recommendations were enclosed. On a merely literary level the dialogued frame of Plutarch's *De cohibenda ira* does not have a parallel in Syriac, since the Syriac *PI* takes instead the shape of a straightforward treatise on anger and its remedies – another marker of the distance from Sergius' *De mundo*, which, instead, maintains the fictitious form of a letter sent by Aristotle to Alexander the Great.

In the search of a possible purpose for our Christianized works, the Syriac translation of another pagan Greek piece provides a tentative comparison. The pseudo-Isocratean *Ad Demonicum (ID)* is in fact a collection of edifying moral advice, which is arranged in a gnomic manner as a series of recommendations sent by Isocrates to the young orphan Demonicus. The work is likely to be a product of the fourth century AD and it was designed for the instruction of young readers.³⁰ The piece was popular at school, as shown by its frequent attestations in scholastic papyri.³¹ Its translation into Syriac, which dates back to the fifth or early sixth century,³² shows a Christianizing agency compatible with that of our adaptors, as in the following passage:³³

Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν εὐσέβει τὰ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς μὴ μόνον θύων ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ὄρκοις ἐμμένων· ἐκεῖνο μὲν γὰρ τῆς τῶν χρημάτων εὐπορίας σημεῖον, τοῦτο δὲ τῆς τῶν τρόπων καλοκαγαθίας τεκμήριον. Τίμα τὸ δαιμόνιον ἀεὶ μὲν, μάλιστα δὲ μετὰ τῆς πόλεως· οὕτω γὰρ δόξεις ἅμα τε τοῖς θεοῖς θύειν καὶ τοῖς νόμοις ἐμμένειν.

ܐܠ ܗܢ ܕܗܠ ܟܪܘܡ ܚܘܒܐ ܕܘܗܝܢ ܟܝܢ
 ..ܚܝܘܬܐ, ܫܘܐܫܝܘܢ ܡܠܢܝ ܟܘܠܟܝܢ
 ܟܠܟܝܢ. ܟܝܢ ܕܘܗܝܢ ܘܪܘܚܝܢ ܕܠ
 ܝܠܝܢ ܟܝܢ. ܝܘܒܝܢ ܫܠܝܝܢܐ ܐܠ ܠܝ ܐܦܝ
 .ܟܝܝܝܝܢ ܟܝܝܝܢ ܟܝܝܝܢ. ܟܝܝܝܝܝܢ ܐܘܫ ܟܝܝܝܢ
 ܚܘ ܕܝܟܝܝܝܝܢܐ. ܟܝܝܝܝܢܐ ܟܝܝܝܝܝܢܐ
 .ܕܝܟܝܝܝܝܝܢܐ ܝܠܝܢ ܟܝܝܝܝܢܐ. ܟܝܝܝܝܝܝܢܐ
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 ❖ ܘܚܘܚܘܢ

²⁹ S. Brock, ‘Syriac translations of Greek popular philosophy’ (2003), 18-9.

³⁰ Basilius Mandilaras (ed.), *Isocrates. Opera Omnia* (Munich, 2003), I 5.

³¹ Theresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 313; Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta, 1996). The documents include a wooden booklet for school use discovered in Kellis (IV cent.), see R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, 2001), 203-4.

³² BM Add. 14658 (VII cent.); BM Add. 14614 (passages; VIII cent.); BM Add. 14620 (IX cent.). Edition in P. de Lagarde, *Analectia Syriaca* (1858), 167-77 from BM Add. 14658. For the manuscripts see W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts* (1870-72); for the chronology see the references in n. 11 above.

³³ ID 13: 169.30-170.6.

In the first place act piously towards the **gods**, not only **by offering sacrifice** but also by abiding by oaths: the former is a sign of abundance of means, the latter is a proof of nobleness of manners. Always honour the *daimonion*, especially along with the town, for in this way you will seem **to offer sacrifice to the gods** as well as to abide by **the laws**.

First of all, you will be concerned about **God, that you shall worship Him and adore Him**, not only through offering(s) and prayer, but also that you shall not break His oaths, for this is a sign of wealth and a mark of good manners. Always honour God, and especially with the congregation, for in this way you will seem **to fear God** and also to keep to **His law**.

The adaptors transformed 'gods' into 'God,' and 'sacrifice to the gods' into the 'fear of God.' The contents of the Syriac *ID* point at a Christian educational milieu, and it might be the case that the Syriac *PI TA PU LC* were similarly conceived as edifying texts for such a readership.

To conclude, a preliminary comparison with the Greek originals shows that the surviving Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius look very much like Christian adaptations, where, on the one hand, the references to the pagan religion were constantly targeted by omissions, and, on the other hand, the adaptors did not hesitate to add a Christian slant to the text. Their selective approach to the *exempla* may provide a hint to the milieu for which the edited works were intended – perhaps an environment interested in the moral advice advertised in the pieces but not willing to entirely accept the framework of authority from which that advice was derived. Indeed, while the *exempla* provided by the upright and not rarely ascetic conduct of philosophers are transmitted entirely, those drawn from mythology are mostly omitted. Moreover, the similarities in both the moralizing contents and the Christianizing editing in Syriac of a piece for school, the pseudo-Isocratean *Ad Demonium*, may suggest that our adaptations were also intended for a Christian educational environment.

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Volume 1
STUDIA PATRISTICA LIII

FORMER DIRECTORS

Gillian CLARK, Bristol, UK 60 Years (1951-2011) of the International Conference on Patristic Studies at Oxford: Key Figures – An Introductory Note.....	3
Elizabeth LIVINGSTONE, Oxford, UK F.L. Cross.....	5
Frances YOUNG, Birmingham, UK Maurice Frank Wiles.....	9
Catherine ROWETT, University of East Anglia, UK Christopher Stead (1913-2008): His Work on Patristics.....	17
Archbishop Rowan WILLIAMS, London, UK Henry Chadwick.....	31
Mark EDWARDS, Christ Church, Oxford, UK, and Markus VINZENT, King’s College, London, UK J.N.D. Kelly	43
Éric REBILLARD, Ithaca, NY, USA William Hugh Clifford Frend (1916-2005): The Legacy of <i>The Donatist Church</i>	55
William E. KLINGSHIRN, Washington, D.C., USA Theology and History in the Thought of Robert Austin Markus	73

Volume 2
STUDIA PATRISTICA LIV

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS IN PATRISTIC TEXTS
(ed. Laurence Mellerin and Hugh A.G. Houghton)

Laurence MELLERIN, Lyon, France, and Hugh A.G. HOUGHTON, Birming- ham, UK Introduction	3
--	---

Laurence MELLERIN, Lyon, France Methodological Issues in Biblindex, An Online Index of Biblical Quotations in Early Christian Literature	11
Guillaume BADY, Lyon, France Quelle était la Bible des Pères, ou quel texte de la Septante choisir pour Biblindex?	33
Guillaume BADY, Lyon, France <i>3 Esdras</i> chez les Pères de l'Église: L'ambiguïté des données et les conditions d'intégration d'un 'apocryphe' dans Biblindex	39
Jérémy DELMULLE, Paris, France Augustin dans «Biblindex». Un premier test: le traitement du <i>De Magistro</i>	55
Hugh A.G. HOUGHTON, Birmingham, UK Patristic Evidence in the New Edition of the <i>Vetus Latina Iohannes</i>	69
Amy M. DONALDSON, Portland, Oregon, USA Explicit References to New Testament Textual Variants by the Church Fathers: Their Value and Limitations	87
Ulrich Bernhard SCHMID, Schöppingen, Germany Marcion and the Textual History of <i>Romans</i> : Editorial Activity and Early Editions of the New Testament	99
Jeffrey KLOHA, St Louis, USA The New Testament Text of Nicetas of Remesiana, with Reference to <i>Luke</i> 1:46	115

Volume 3

STUDIA PATRISTICA LV

EARLY MONASTICISM AND CLASSICAL *PAIDEIA*

(ed. Samuel Rubenson)

Samuel RUBENSON, Lund, Sweden Introduction	3
Samuel RUBENSON, Lund, Sweden The Formation and Re-formations of the Sayings of the Desert Fathers	5

Britt DAHLMAN, Lund, Sweden
The Collectio Scorialensis Parva: An Alphabetical Collection of Old Apophthegmatic and Hagiographic Material..... 23

Bo HOLMBERG, Lund, Sweden
 The Syriac Collection of *Apophthegmata Patrum* in MS Sin. syr. 46 35

Lillian I. LARSEN, Redlands, USA
 On Learning a New Alphabet: The Sayings of the Desert Fathers and the Monostichs of Menander..... 59

Henrik RYDELL JOHNSÉN, Lund, Sweden
 Renunciation, Reorientation and Guidance: Patterns in Early Monasticism and Ancient Philosophy 79

David WESTBERG, Uppsala, Sweden
 Rhetorical Exegesis in Procopius of Gaza's *Commentary on Genesis* 95

Apophthegmata Patrum Abbreviations 109

Volume 4

STUDIA PATRISTICA LVI

REDISCOVERING ORIGEN

Lorenzo PERRONE, Bologna, Italy
 Origen's 'Confessions': Recovering the Traces of a Self-Portrait 3

Róbert SOMOS, University of Pécs, Hungary
 Is the Handmaid Stoic or Middle Platonic? Some Comments on Origen's Use of Logic 29

Paul R. KOLBET, Wellesley, USA
 Rethinking the Rationales for Origen's Use of Allegory 41

Brian BARRETT, South Bend, USA
 Origen's Spiritual Exegesis as a Defense of the Literal Sense..... 51

Tina DOLIDZE, Tbilisi, Georgia
 Equivocality of Biblical Language in Origen..... 65

Miyako DEMURA, Tohoku Gakuin University, Sendai, Japan
 Origen and the Exegetical Tradition of the Sarah-Hagar Motif in Alexandria 73

Elizabeth Ann DIVELY LAURO, Los Angeles, USA The Eschatological Significance of Scripture According to Origen...	83
Lorenzo PERRONE, Bologna, Italy Rediscovering Origen Today: First Impressions of the New Collection of Homilies on the <i>Psalms</i> in the <i>Codex monacensis Graecus</i> 314....	103
Ronald E. HEINE, Eugene, OR, USA Origen and his Opponents on <i>Matthew</i> 19:12	123
Allan E. JOHNSON, Minnesota, USA Interior Landscape: Origen's Homily 21 on <i>Luke</i>	129
Stephen BAGBY, Durham, UK The 'Two Ways' Tradition in Origen's <i>Commentary on Romans</i>	135
Francesco PIERI, Bologna, Italy Origen on <i>1Corinthians</i> : Homilies or Commentary?	143
Thomas D. MCGLOTHLIN, Durham, USA Resurrection, Spiritual Interpretation, and Moral Reformation: A Func- tional Approach to Resurrection in Origen	157
Ilaria L.E. RAMELLI, Milan, Italy, and Durham, UK 'Preexistence of Souls'? The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians	167
Ilaria L.E. RAMELLI, Milan, Italy, and Durham, UK The <i>Dialogue of Adamantius</i> : A Document of Origen's Thought? (Part Two)	227

Volume 5

STUDIA PATRISTICA LVII

EVAGRIUS PONTICUS ON CONTEMPLATION

(ed. Monica Tobon)

Monica TOBON, Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury, UK Introduction	3
Kevin CORRIGAN, Emory University, USA Suffocation or Germination: Infinity, Formation and Calibration of the Mind in Evagrius' Notion of Contemplation	9

Monica TOBON, Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury, UK Reply to Kevin Corrigan, 'Suffocation or Germination: Infinity, Formation and Calibration of the Mind in Evagrius' Notion of Contemplation'	27
Fr. Luke DYSINGER, OSB, Saint John's Seminary, Camarillo, USA An Exegetical Way of Seeing: Contemplation and Spiritual Guidance in Evagrius Ponticus	31
Monica TOBON, Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury, UK Raising Body and Soul to the Order of the <i>Nous</i> : Anthropology and Contemplation in Evagrius	51
Robin Darling YOUNG, University of Notre Dame, USA The Path to Contemplation in Evagrius' Letters	75

Volume 6

STUDIA PATRISTICA LVIII

NEOPLATONISM AND PATRISTICS

Victor YUDIN, UCL, OVC, Brussels, Belgium Patristic Neoplatonism	3
Cyril HOVORUN, Kiev, Ukraine Influence of Neoplatonism on Formation of Theological Language ...	13
Luc BRISSON, CNRS, Villejuif, France Clement and Cyril of Alexandria: Confronting Platonism with Chris- tianity	19
Alexey R. FOKIN, Moscow, Russia The Doctrine of the 'Intelligible Triad' in Neoplatonism and Patristics	45
Jean-Michel COUNET, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium Speech Act in the Demiurge's Address to the Young Gods in <i>Timaeus</i> 41 A-B. Interpretations of Greek Philosophers and Patristic Receptions	73
István PERCZEL, Hungary The Pseudo-Didymian <i>De trinitate</i> and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areo- pagite: A Preliminary Study	83

Andrew LOUTH, Durham, UK Symbolism and the Angels in Dionysios the Areopagite.....	109
Demetrios BATHRELLOS, Athens, Greece Neo-platonism and Maximus the Confessor on the Knowledge of God	117
Victor YUDIN, UCL, OVC, Brussels, Belgium A Stoic Conversion: Porphyry by Plato. Augustine's Reading of the <i>Timaeus</i> 41 a7-b6.....	127
Levan GIGINEISHVILI, Iliia State University, Georgia Eros in Theology of Ioane Petritsi and Shota Rustaveli.....	181

Volume 7

STUDIA PATRISTICA LIX

EARLY CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHIES

(ed. Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent)

Allen BRENT, London, UK Transforming Pagan Cultures	3
James A. FRANCIS, Lexington, Kentucky, USA Seeing God(s): Images and the Divine in Pagan and Christian Thought in the Second to Fourth Centuries AD.....	5
Emanuele CASTELLI, Università di Bari Aldo Moro, Italy The Symbols of Anchor and Fish in the Most Ancient Parts of the Catacomb of Priscilla: Evidence and Questions	11
Catherine C. TAYLOR, Washington, D.C., USA Painted Veneration: The Priscilla Catacomb Annunciation and the <i>Protoevangelion of James</i> as Precedents for Late Antique Annuncia- tion Iconography.....	21
Peter WIDDICOMBE, Hamilton, Canada Noah and Foxes: <i>Song of Songs</i> 2:15 and the Patristic Legacy in Text and Art.....	39
Catherine Brown TKACZ, Spokane, Washington, USA <i>En colligo duo ligna</i> : The Widow of Zarephath and the Cross.....	53

György HEIDL, University of Pécs, Hungary Early Christian Imagery of the ' <i>virga virtutis</i> ' and Ambrose's Theology of Sacraments	69
Lee M. JEFFERSON, Danville, Kentucky, USA Perspectives on the Nude Youth in Fourth-Century Sarcophagi Representations of the Raising of Lazarus	77
Katharina HEYDEN, Göttingen, Germany The Bethesda Sarcophagi: Testimonies to Holy Land Piety in the Western Theodosian Empire	89
Anne KARAHAN, Stockholm, Sweden, and Istanbul, Turkey The Image of God in Byzantine Cappadocia and the Issue of Supreme Transcendence	97
George ZOGRAFIDIS, Thessaloniki, Greece Is a Patristic Aesthetics Possible? The Eastern Paradigm Re-examined	113

Volume 8

STUDIA PATRISTICA LX

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LATE ANTIQUE *SPECTACULA*

(ed. Karin Schlapbach)

Karin SCHLAPBACH, Ottawa, Canada Introduction. New Perspectives on Late Antique <i>spectacula</i> : Between Reality and Imagination	3
Karin SCHLAPBACH, Ottawa, Canada Literary Technique and the Critique of <i>spectacula</i> in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola	7
Alexander PUK, Heidelberg, Germany A Success Story: Why did the Late Ancient Theatre Continue?	21
Juan Antonio JIMÉNEZ SÁNCHEZ, Barcelona, Spain The Monk Hypatius and the Olympic Games of Chalcedon	39
Andrew W. WHITE, Stratford University, Woodbridge, Virginia, USA Mime and the Secular Sphere: Notes on Choricus' <i>Apologia Mimerum</i>	47

David POTTER, The University of Michigan, USA Anatomies of Violence: Entertainment and Politics in the Eastern Roman Empire from Theodosius I to Heraclius.....	61
Annewies VAN DEN HOEK, Harvard, USA Execution as Entertainment: The Roman Context of Martyrdom.....	73

Volume 9

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXI

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND DIVINE INSPIRATION IN AUGUSTINE

(ed. Jonathan Yates)

Anthony DUPONT, Leuven, Belgium Augustine's Preaching on Grace at Pentecost	3
Geert M.A. VAN REYN, Leuven, Belgium Divine Inspiration in Virgil's <i>Aeneid</i> and Augustine's Christian Alter- native in <i>Confessiones</i>	15
Anne-Isabelle BOUTON-TOUBOULIC, Bordeaux, France Consonance and Dissonance: The Unifying Action of the Holy Ghost in Saint Augustine.....	31
Matthew Alan GAUMER, Leuven, Belgium, and Kaiserslautern, Germany Against the Holy Spirit: Augustine of Hippo's Polemical Use of the Holy Spirit against the Donatists	53
Diana STANCIU, KU Leuven, Belgium Augustine's (Neo)Platonic Soul and Anti-Pelagian Spirit.....	63

Volume 10

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXII

THE GENRES OF LATE ANTIQUE LITERATURE

Yuri SHICHALIN, Moscow, Russia The Traditional View of Late Platonism as a Self-contained System	3
Bernard POWDERON, Tours, France Y a-t-il lieu de parler de genre littéraire à propos des Apologies du second siècle?	11

John DILLON, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
 Protreptic Epistolography, Hellenic and Christian 29

Svetlana MESYATS, Moscow, Russia
 Does the First have a Hypostasis? Some Remarks to the History of
 the Term *hypostasis* in Platonic and Christian Tradition of the 4th –
 5th Centuries AD 41

Anna USACHEVA, Moscow, Russia
 The Term πανήγυρις in the Holy Bible and Christian Literature of the
 Fourth Century and the Development of Christian Panegyric Genre 57

Olga ALIEVA, National Research University Higher School of Economics,
 Moscow, Russia
 Protreptic Motifs in St Basil’s Homily *On the Words ‘Give Heed to
 Thyself’* 69

FOUCAULT AND THE PRACTICE OF PATRISTICS

David NEWHEISER, Chicago, USA
 Foucault and the Practice of Patristics..... 81

Devin SINGH, New Haven, USA
 Disciplining Eusebius: Discursive Power and Representation of the
 Court Theologian..... 89

Rick ELGENDY, Chicago, USA
 Practices of the Self and (Spiritually) Disciplined Resistance: What
 Michel Foucault Could Have Said about Gregory of Nyssa 103

Marika ROSE, Durham, UK
 Patristics after Foucault: Genealogy, History and the Question of
 Justice 115

PATRISTIC STUDIES IN LATIN AMERICA

Patricia Andrea CÍNER, Argentina
 Los Estudios Patrísticos en Latinoamérica: pasado, presente y future 123

Edinei DA ROSA CÂNDIDO, Florianópolis, Brasil
 Proposta para publicações patrísticas no Brasil e América Latina: os
 seis anos dos Cadernos Patrísticos..... 131

Oscar VELÁSQUEZ, Santiago de Chile, Chile	
La historia de la patrística en Chile: un largo proceso de maduración	135

HISTORICA

Guy G. STROUMSA, Oxford, UK, and Jerusalem, Israel	
Athens, Jerusalem and Mecca: The Patristic Crucible of the Abrahamic Religions	153
Josef LÖSSL, Cardiff, Wales, UK	
Memory as History? Patristic Perspectives	169
Hervé INGLEBERT, Paris-Ouest Nanterre-La Défense, France	
La formation des élites chrétiennes d'Augustin à Cassiodore	185
Charlotte KÖCKERT, Heidelberg, Germany	
The Rhetoric of Conversion in Ancient Philosophy and Christianity	205
Arthur P. URBANO, Jr., Providence, USA	
'Dressing the Christian': The Philosopher's Mantle as Signifier of Pedagogical and Moral Authority	213
Vladimir IVANOVICI, Bucharest, Romania	
Competing Paradoxes: Martyrs and the Spread of Christianity Revisited	231
Helen RHEE, Santa Barbara, California, USA	
Wealth, Business Activities, and Blurring of Christian Identity	245
Jean-Baptiste PIGGIN, Hamburg, Germany	
The Great Stemma: A Late Antique Diagrammatic Chronicle of Pre-Christian Time	259
Mikhail M. KAZAKOV, Smolensk, Russia	
Types of Location of Christian Churches in the Christianizing Roman Empire	279
David Neal GREENWOOD, Edinburgh, UK	
Pollution Wars: Consecration and Desecration from Constantine to Julian	289
Christine SHEPARDSON, University of Tennessee, USA	
Apollo's Charred Remains: Making Meaning in Fourth-Century Antioch	297

Jacquelyn E. WINSTON, Azusa, USA The 'Making' of an Emperor: Constantinian Identity Formation in his Invective Letter to Arius	303
Isabella IMAGE, Oxford, UK Nicene Fraud at the Council of Rimini	313
Thomas BRAUCH, Mount Pleasant, Michigan, USA From Valens to Theodosius: 'Nicene' and 'Arian' Fortunes in the East August 378 to November 380	323
Silvia MARGUTTI, Perugia, Italy The Power of the Relics: Theodosius I and the Head of John the Baptist in Constantinople	339
Antonia ATANASSOVA, Boston, USA A Ladder to Heaven: Ephesus I and the Theology of Marian Mediation	353
Luise Marion FRENKEL, Cambridge, UK What are Sermons Doing in the Proceedings of a Council? The Case of Ephesus 431.....	363
Sandra LEUENBERGER-WENGER, Münster, Germany The Case of Theodoret at the Council of Chalcedon.....	371
Sergey TROSTYANSKIY, Union Theological Seminary, New York, USA The <i>Encyclical</i> of Basiliscus (475) and its Theological Significance; Some Interpretational Issues	383
Eric FOURNIER, West Chester, USA Victor of Vita and the Conference of 484: A Pastiche of 411?	395
Dana Iuliana VIEZURE, South Orange, NJ, USA The Fate of Emperor Zeno's <i>Henoticon</i> : Christological Authority after the Healing of the Acacian Schism (484-518).....	409
Roberta FRANCHI, Firenze, Italy <i>Aurum in luto quaerere</i> (Hier., <i>Ep.</i> 107,12). Donne tra eresia e ortodos- sia nei testi cristiani di IV-V secolo.....	419
Winfried BÜTTNER, Bamberg, Germany Der <i>Christus medicus</i> und ein <i>medicus christianus</i> : Hagiographische Anmerkungen zu einem Klerikerarzt des 5. Jh.....	431

Susan LOFTUS, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia Episcopal Consecration – the Religious Practice of Late Antique Gaul in the 6 th Century: Ideal and Reality	439
Rocco BORGOGNONI, Baggio, Italy Capitals at War: Images of Rome and Constantinople from the Age of Justinian	455
Pauline ALLEN, Brisbane, Australia, and Pretoria, South Africa Prolegomena to a Study of the Letter-Bearer in Christian Antiquity	481
Ariane BODIN, Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense, France The Outward Appearance of Clerics in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries in Italy, Gaul and Africa: Representation and Reality	493
Christopher BONURA, Gainesville, USA The Man and the Myth: Did Heraclius Know the Legend of the Last Roman Emperor?	503
Petr BALCÁREK, Olomouc, Czech Republic The Cult of the Holy Wisdom in Byzantine Palestine	515

Volume 11

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXIII

BIBLICA

Mark W. ELLIOTT, St Andrews, UK <i>Wisdom of Solomon</i> , Canon and Authority	3
Joseph VERHEYDEN, Leuven, Belgium A Puzzling Chapter in the Reception History of the Gospels: Victor of Antioch and his So-called ‘Commentary on <i>Mark</i> ’	17
Christopher A. BEELEY, New Haven, Conn., USA ‘Let This Cup Pass from Me’ (<i>Matth.</i> 26.39): The Soul of Christ in Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, and Maximus Confessor	29
Paul M. BLOWERS, Emmanuel Christian Seminary, Johnson City, Ten- nessee, USA The Groaning and Longing of Creation: Variant Patterns of Patristic Interpretation of <i>Romans</i> 8:19-23	45

Riemer ROUKEMA, Zwolle, The Netherlands
 The Foolishness of the Message about the Cross (1Cor. 1:18-25):
 Embarrassment and Consent 55

Jennifer R. STRAWBRIDGE, Oxford, UK
 A Community of Interpretation: The Use of 1Corinthians 2:6-16 by
 Early Christians 69

Pascale FARAGO-BERMON, Paris, France
 Surviving the Disaster: The Use of *Psychē* in 1Peter 3:20 81

Everett FERGUSON, Abilene, USA
 Some Patristic Interpretations of the Angels of the Churches (*Apo-
 calypse* 1-3) 95

PHILOSOPHICA, THEOLOGICA, ETHICA

Averil CAMERON, Oxford, UK
 Can Christians Do Dialogue? 103

Sophie LUNN-ROCKLIFFE, King’s College London, UK
 The Diabolical Problem of Satan’s First Sin: Self-moved Pride or a
 Response to the Goads of Envy? 121

Loren KERNS, Portland, Oregon, USA
 Soul and Passions in Philo of Alexandria 141

Nicola SPANU, London, UK
 The Interpretation of *Timaeus* 39E7-9 in the Context of Plotinus’ and
 Numenius’ Philosophical Circles 155

Sarah STEWART-KROEKER, Princeton, USA
 Augustine’s Incarnational Appropriation of Plotinus: A Journey for
 the Feet 165

Sébastien MORLET, Paris, France
 Encore un nouveau fragment du traité de Porphyre contre les chrétiens
 (Marcel d’Ancyre, fr. 88 Klostermann = fr. 22 Seibt/Vinzent)? 179

Aaron P. JOHNSON, Cleveland, Tennessee, USA
 Porphyry’s *Letter to Anebo* among the Christians: Augustine and
 Eusebius 187

Susanna ELM, Berkeley, USA Laughter in Christian Polemics.....	195
Robert WIŚNIEWSKI, Warsaw, Poland Looking for Dreams and Talking with Martyrs: The Internal Roots of Christian Incubation	203
Simon C. MIMOUNI, Paris, France Les traditions patristiques sur la famille de Jésus: Retour sur un probl�me doctrinal du IV ^e si�cle	209
Christophe GUIGNARD, B�le/Lausanne, Suisse Julius Africanus et le texte de la g�n�alogie lucanienne de J�sus	221
Demetrios BATHRELLOS, Athens, Greece The Patristic Tradition on the Sinlessness of Jesus.....	235
Hajnalka TAMAS, Leuven, Belgium <i>Scio unum Deum vivum et verum, qui est trinus et unus Deus: The Relevance of Creedal Elements in the Passio Donati, Venusti et Her- mogenis</i>	243
Christoph MARKSCHIES, Berlin, Germany On Classifying Creeds the Classical German Way: ‘Privat-Bekenn- nisse’ (‘Private Creeds’)	259
Markus VINZENT, King’s College London, UK From Zephyrinus to Damasus – What did Roman Bishops believe?....	273
Adolf Martin RITTER, Heidelberg, Germany The ‘Three Main Creeds’ of the Lutheran Reformation and their Specific Contexts: Testimonies and Commentaries	287
Hieromonk Methody (ZINKOVSKY), Hieromonk Kirill (ZINKOVSKY), St Peters- burg Orthodox Theological Academy, Russia The Term �νυπ�σταντων and its Theological Meaning	313
Christian LANGE, Erlangen-N�rnberg, Germany Miaenergetism – A New Term for the History of Dogma?	327
Marek JANKOWIAK, Oxford, UK The Invention of Dyotheletism.....	335
Spyros P. PANAGOPOULOS, Patras, Greece The Byzantine Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption.....	343

Christopher T. BOUNDS, Marion, Indiana, USA
 The Understanding of Grace in Selected Apostolic Fathers 351

Andreas MERKT, Regensburg, Germany
 Before the Birth of Purgatory 361

Verna E.F. HARRISON, Los Angeles, USA
 Children in Paradise and Death as God’s Gift: From Theophilus of
 Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons to Gregory Nazianzen 367

Moshe B. BLIDSTEIN, Oxford, UK
 Polemics against Death Defilement in Third-Century Christian Sour-
 ces 373

Susan L. GRAHAM, Jersey City, USA
 Two Mount Zions: Fourth-Century Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic... 385

Sean C. HILL, Gainesville, Florida, USA
 Early Christian Ethnic Reasoning in the Light of *Genesis* 6:1-4 393

Volume 12

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXIV

ASCETICA

Kate WILKINSON, Baltimore, USA
 Gender Roles and Mental Reproduction among Virgins 3

David WOODS, Cork, Ireland
 Rome, Gregoria, and Madaba: A Warning against Sexual Temptation 9

Alexis C. TORRANCE, Princeton, USA
 The Angel and the Spirit of Repentance: Hermas and the Early
 Monastic Concept of *Metanoia* 15

Lois FARAG, St Paul, MN, USA
 Heroines not Penitents: Saints of Sex Slavery in the *Apophthegmata*
Patrum in Roman Law Context 21

Nienke VOS, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
 Seeing *Hesychia*: Appeals to the Imagination in the *Apophthegmata*
Patrum 33

Peter TÓTH, London, UK ‘In volumine Longobardo’: New Light on the Date and Origin of the Latin Translation of St Anthony’s Seven Letters.....	47
Kathryn HAGER, Oxford, UK John Cassian: The Devil in the Details.....	59
Liviu BARBU, Cambridge, UK Spiritual Fatherhood in and outside the Desert: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective.....	65

LITURGICA

T.D. BARNES, Edinburgh, UK The First Christmas in Rome, Antioch and Constantinople.....	77
Gerard ROUWHORST, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands Eucharistic Meals East of Antioch.....	85
Anthony GELSTON, Durham, UK A Fragmentary Sixth-Century East Syrian Anaphora.....	105
Richard BARRETT, Bloomington, Indiana, USA ‘Let Us Put Away All Earthly Care’: Mysticism and the <i>Cherubikon</i> of the Byzantine Rite.....	111

ORIENTALIA

B.N. WOLFE, Oxford, UK The Skeireins: A Neglected Text.....	127
Alberto RIGOLIO, Oxford, UK From ‘Sacrifice to the Gods’ to the ‘Fear of God’: Omissions, Additions and Changes in the Syriac Translations of Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius.....	133
Richard VAGGIONE, OHC, Toronto, Canada Who were Mani’s ‘Greeks’? ‘Greek Bread’ in the <i>Cologne Mani Codex</i>	145
Flavia RUANI, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, France Between Myth and Exegesis: Ephrem the Syrian on the Manichaean <i>Book of Giants</i>	155

Hannah HUNT, Leeds, UK 'Clothed in the Body': The Garment of Flesh and the Garment of Glory in Syrian Religious Anthropology.....	167
Joby PATERUPARAMPIL, Leuven, Belgium <i>Regula Fidei</i> in Ephrem's <i>Hymni de Fide</i> LXVII and in the <i>Sermones de Fide</i> IV.....	177
Jeanne-Nicole SAINT-LAURENT, Colchester, VT, USA Humour in Syriac Hagiography	199
Erik W. KOLB, Washington, D.C., USA 'It Is With God's Words That Burn Like a Fire': Monastic Discipline in Shenoute's Monastery	207
Hugo LUNDHAUG, Oslo, Norway Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt: Shenoute of Atripe and the Nag Hammadi Codices	217
Aho SHEMUNKASHO, Salzburg, Austria Preliminaries to an Edition of the Hagiography of St Aho the Stran- ger (ܐܫܘܟܐ ܪܫܐܝܢܐ)	229
Peter BRUNS, Bamberg, Germany Von Magiern und Mönchen – Zoroastrische Polemik gegen das Christentum in der armenischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung.....	237
Grigory KESSEL, Marburg, Germany New Manuscript Witnesses to the 'Second Part' of Isaac of Nineveh	245

CRITICA ET PHILOLOGICA

Michael PENN, Mount Holyoke College, USA Using Computers to Identify Ancient Scribal Hands: A Preliminary Report	261
Felix ALBRECHT, Göttingen, Germany A Hitherto Unknown Witness to the Apostolic Constitutions in Uncial Script.....	267
Nikolai LIPATOV-CHICHERIN, Nottingham, UK, and St Petersburg, Russia Preaching as the Audience Heard it: Unedited Transcripts of Patristic Homilies	277

Pierre AUGUSTIN, Paris, France Entre codicologie, philologie et histoire: La description de manuscrits parisiens (<i>Codices Chrysostomici Graeci VII</i>)	299
Octavian GORDON, București, Romania Denominational Translation of Patristic Texts into Romanian: Elements for a Patristic Translation Theory	309

Volume 13

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXV

THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES

William C. RUTHERFORD, Houston, USA Citizenship among Jews and Christians: Civic Discourse in the <i>Apology</i> of Aristides	3
Paul HARTOG, Des Moines, USA The Relationship between <i>Paraenesis</i> and Polemic in Polycarp, <i>Phi-</i> <i>lippians</i>	27
Romulus D. STEFANUT, Chicago, Illinois, USA Eucharistic Theology in the Martyrdom of Ignatius of Antioch	39
Ferdinando BERGAMELLI, Turin, Italy La figura dell'Apóstolo Paolo in Ignazio di Antiochia.....	49
Viviana Laura FÉLIX, Buenos Aires, Argentina La influencia de platonismo medio en Justino a la luz de los estudios recientes sobre el <i>Didaskalikos</i>	63
Charles A. BOBERTZ, Collegeville, USA 'Our Opinion is in Accordance with the Eucharist': Irenaeus and the <i>Sitz im Leben</i> of <i>Mark's Gospel</i>	79
Ysabel DE ANDIA, Paris, France Adam-Enfant chez Irénée de Lyon	91
Scott D. MORINGIELLO, Villanova, Pennsylvania, USA The <i>Pneumatikos</i> as Scriptural Interpreter: Irenaeus on 1 <i>Cor.</i> 2:15 ..	105
Adam J. POWELL, Durham, UK Irenaeus and God's Gifts: Reciprocity in <i>Against Heresies</i> IV 14.1...	119

Charles E. HILL, Maitland, Florida, USA ‘The Writing which Says...’ <i>The Shepherd</i> of Hermas in the Writings of Irenaeus	127
T. Scott MANOR, Paris, France Proclus: The North African Montanist?	139
István M. BUGÁR, Debrecen, Hungary Can Theological Language Be Logical? The Case of ‘Josipe’ and Melito	147
Oliver NICHOLSON, Minneapolis, USA, and Tiverton, UK What Makes a Voluntary Martyr?	159
Thomas O’LOUGHLIN, Nottingham, UK The <i>Protevangelium of James</i> : A Case of Gospel Harmonization in the Second Century?	165
Jussi JUNNI, Helsinki, Finland Celsus’ Arguments against the Truth of the Bible	175
Miroslaw MEJZNER, Warsaw (UKSW), Poland The Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Resurrection according to Methodius of Olympus.....	185
László PERENDY, Budapest, Hungary The Threads of Tradition: The Parallelisms between <i>Ad Diognetum</i> and <i>Ad Autolyicum</i>	197
Nestor KAVVADAS, Tübingen, Germany Some Late Texts Pertaining to the Accusation of Ritual Cannibalism against Second- and Third-Century Christians.....	209
Jared SECORD, Ann Arbor, USA Medicine and Sophistry in Hippolytus’ <i>Refutatio</i>	217
Eliezer GONZALEZ, Gold Coast, Australia The Afterlife in the <i>Passion of Perpetua</i> and in the Works of Tertul- lian: A Clash of Traditions	225

APOCRYPHA

Julian PETKOV, University of Heidelberg, Germany Techniques of Disguise in Apocryphal Apocalyptic Literature: Bridging the Gap between ‘Authorship’ and ‘Authority’.....	241
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Marek STAROWIEYSKI, Pontifical Faculty of Theology, Warsaw, Poland St. Paul dans les Apocryphes.....	253
David M. REIS, Bridgewater, USA Peripatetic Pedagogy: Travel and Transgression in the <i>Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles</i>	263
Charlotte TOUATI, Lausanne, Switzerland A 'Kerygma of Peter' behind the <i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> , the <i>Pseudo-Clementine Romance</i> and the <i>Eclogae Propheticae</i> of Clement of Alexandria	277

TERTULLIAN AND RHETORIC

(ed. Willemien Otten)

David E. WILHITE, Waco, TX, USA Rhetoric and Theology in Tertullian: What Tertullian Learned from Paul	295
Frédéric CHAPOT, Université de Strasbourg, France Rhétorique et herméneutique chez Tertullien. Remarques sur la composition de l' <i>Adu. Praxean</i>	313
Willemien OTTEN, Chicago, USA Tertullian's Rhetoric of Redemption: Flesh and Embodiment in <i>De carne Christi</i> and <i>De resurrectione mortuorum</i>	331
Geoffrey D. DUNN, Australian Catholic University, Australia Rhetoric and Tertullian: A Response	349

FROM TERTULLIAN TO TYCONIUS

J. Albert HARRILL, Bloomington, Indiana, USA Accusing Philosophy of Causing Headaches: Tertullian's Use of a Comedic Topos (<i>Praescr.</i> 16.2)	359
Richard BRUMBACK, Austin, Texas, USA Tertullian's Trinitarian Monarchy in <i>Adversus Praxean</i> : A Rhetorical Analysis	367
Marcin R. WYSOCKI, Lublin, Poland Eschatology of the Time of Persecutions in the Writings of Tertullian and Cyprian.....	379

David L. RIGGS, Marion, Indiana, USA The Apologetics of Grace in Tertullian and Early African Martyr Acts	395
Agnes A. NAGY, Genève, Suisse Les candélabres et les chiens au banquet scandaleux. Tertullien, Minucius Felix et les unions œdipiennes.....	407
Thomas F. HEYNE, M.D., M.St., Boston, USA Tertullian and Obstetrics.....	419
Ulrike BRUCHMÜLLER, Berlin, Germany Christliche Erotik in platonischem Gewand: Transformationstheoretische Überlegungen zur Umdeutung von Platons <i>Symposion</i> bei Methodios von Olympos.....	435
David W. PERRY, Hull, UK Cyprian's <i>Letter to Fidus</i> : A New Perspective on its Significance for the History of Infant Baptism	445
Adam PLOYD, Atlanta, USA <i>Tres Unum Sunt</i> : The Johannine Comma in Cyprian.....	451
Laetitia CICCOLINI, Paris, France Le personnage de Syméon dans la polémique anti-juive: Le cas de l' <i>Ad Vigilium episcopum de Iudaica incredulitate</i> (CPL 67°).....	459

Volume 14

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXVI

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Jana PLÁTOVÁ, Centre for Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Texts, Olomouc, Czech Republic Die Fragmente des Clemens Alexandrinus in den griechischen und arabischen Katenen.....	3
Marco RIZZI, Milan, Italy The Work of Clement of Alexandria in the Light of his Contemporary Philosophical Teaching.....	11
Stuart Rowley THOMSON, Oxford, UK Apostolic Authority: Reading and Writing Legitimacy in Clement of Alexandria	19

Davide DAINESE, Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose ‘Giovanni XXIII’, Bologna, Italy	
Clement of Alexandria’s Refusal of Valentinian ἀπόρροια	33
Dan BATOVICI, St Andrews, UK	
Hermas in Clement of Alexandria	41
Piotr ASHWIN-SIEJKOWSKI, Chichester, UK	
Clement of Alexandria on the Creation of Eve: Exegesis in the Ser- vice of a Pedagogical Project.....	53
Pamela MULLINS REAVES, Durham, NC, USA	
Multiple Martyrdoms and Christian Identity in Clement of Alexan- dria’s <i>Stromateis</i>	61
Michael J. THATE, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT, USA	
Identity Construction as Resistance: Figuring Hegemony, Biopolitics, and Martyrdom as an Approach to Clement of Alexandria.....	69
Veronika ČERNUŠKOVÁ, Olomouc, Czech Republic	
The Concept of εὐπάθεια in Clement of Alexandria	87
Kamala PAREL-NUTTALL, Calgary, Canada	
Clement of Alexandria’s Ideal Christian Wife	99

THE FOURTH-CENTURY DEBATES

Michael B. SIMMONS, Montgomery, Alabama, USA	
Universalism in Eusebius of Caesarea: The Soteriological Use of ⲉⲃⲉⲛⲉⲧⲓⲛⲉⲛⲉⲛⲉⲛⲉⲛⲉⲛ in Book III of the <i>Theophany</i>	125
Jon M. ROBERTSON, Portland, Oregon, USA	
‘The Beloved of God’: The Christological Backdrop for the Political Theory of Eusebius of Caesarea in <i>Laus Constantini</i>	135
Cordula BANDT, Berlin, Germany	
Some Remarks on the Tone of Eusebius’ <i>Commentary on Psalms</i> ...	143
Clayton COOMBS, Melbourne, Australia	
Literary Device or Legitimate Diversity: Assessing Eusebius’ Use of the Optative Mood in <i>Quaestiones ad Marinum</i>	151
David J. DEVORE, Berkeley, California, USA	
Eusebius’ Un-Josephan History: Two Portraits of Philo of Alexandria and the Sources of Ecclesiastical Historiography.....	161

Gregory Allen ROBBINS, Denver, USA 'Number Determinate is Kept Concealed' (Dante, <i>Paradiso</i> XXIX 135): Eusebius and the Transformation of the List (<i>Hist. eccl.</i> III 25)	181
James CORKE-WEBSTER, Manchester, UK A Literary Historian: Eusebius of Caesarea and the Martyrs of Lyons and Palestine	191
Samuel FERNÁNDEZ, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile ¿Crisis arriana o crisis monarquiana en el siglo IV? Las críticas de Marcelo de Ancira a Asterio de Capadocia	203
Laurence VIANÈS, Université de Grenoble / HiSoMA «Sources Chrétien- nes», France L'interprétation des prophètes par Apollinaire de Laodicée a-t-elle influencé Théodore de Mopsueste?	209
Hélène GRELIER-DENEUX, Paris, France La réception d'Apollinaire dans les controverses christologiques du V ^e siècle à partir de deux témoins, Cyrille d'Alexandrie et Théodoret de Cyr	223
Sophie H. CARTWRIGHT, Edinburgh, UK So-called Platonism, the Soul, and the Humanity of Christ in Eus- tathius of Antioch's <i>Contra Ariomanitas et de anima</i>	237
Donna R. HAWK-REINHARD, St Louis, USA Cyril of Jerusalem's Sacramental <i>Theōsis</i>	247
Georgij ZAKHAROV, Moscou, Russie Théologie de l'image chez Germinius de Sirmium	257
Michael Stuart WILLIAMS, Maynooth, Ireland Auxentius of Milan: From Orthodoxy to Heresy	263
Jarred A. MERCER, Oxford, UK The Life in the Word and the Light of Humanity: The Exegetical Foundation of Hilary of Poitiers' Doctrine of Divine Infinity	273
Janet SIDAWAY, Edinburgh, UK Hilary of Poitiers and Phoebadius of Agen: Who Influenced Whom?	283
Dominique GONNET, S.J., Lyon, France The Use of the Bible within Athanasius of Alexandria's <i>Letters to Serapion</i>	291

William G. RUSCH, New York, USA Corresponding with Emperor Jovian: The Strategy and Theology of Apollinaris of Laodicea and Athanasius of Alexandria.....	301
Rocco SCHEMBRA, Catania, Italia Il percorso editoriale del <i>De non parcendo in deum delinquentibus</i> di Lucifero di Cagliari	309
Caroline MACÉ, Leuven, Belgium, and Ilse DE VOS, Oxford, UK Pseudo-Athanasius, <i>Quaestio ad Antiochum</i> 136 and the <i>Theosophia</i>	319

Volume 15

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXVII

CAPPADOCIAN WRITERS

Giulio MASPERO, Rome, Italy The Spirit Manifested by the Son in Cappadocian Thought	3
Darren SARISKY, Cambridge, UK Who Can Listen to Sermons on <i>Genesis</i> ? Theological Exegesis and Theological Anthropology in Basil of Caesarea's <i>Hexaemeron</i> Hom- ilies	13
Ian C. JONES, New York, USA Humans and Animals: St Basil of Caesarea's Ascetic Evocation of Paradise.....	25
Benoît GAIN, Grenoble, France Voyageur en Exil: Un aspect central de la condition humaine selon Basile de Césarée	33
Anne Gordon KEIDEL, Boston, USA Nautical Imagery in the Writings of Basil of Caesarea	41
Martin MAYERHOFER, Rom, Italien Die basilianische Anthropologie als Verständnisschlüssel zu <i>Ad ado- lescentes</i>	47
Anna M. SILVAS, Armidale NSW, Australia Basil and Gregory of Nyssa on the Ascetic Life: Introductory Com- parisons.....	53

Antony MEREDITH, S.J., London, UK Universal Salvation and Human Response in Gregory of Nyssa.....	63
Robin ORTON, London, UK 'Physical' Soteriology in Gregory of Nyssa: A Response to Reinhard M. Hübner.....	69
Marcello LA MATINA, Macerata, Italy Seeing God through Language. Quotation and Deixis in Gregory of Nyssa's <i>Against Eunomius</i> , Book III	77
Hui XIA, Leuven, Belgium The Light Imagery in Gregory of Nyssa's <i>Contra Eunomium</i> III 6..	91
Francisco BASTITTA HARRIET, Buenos Aires, Argentina Does God 'Follow' Human Decision? An Interpretation of a Passage from Gregory of Nyssa's <i>De vita Moysis</i> (II 86).....	101
Miguel BRUGAROLAS, Pamplona, Spain Anointing and Kingdom: Some Aspects of Gregory of Nyssa's Pneu- matology	113
Matthew R. LOOTENS, New York City, USA A Preface to Gregory of Nyssa's <i>Contra Eunomium</i> ? Gregory's <i>Epis- tula</i> 29.....	121
Nathan D. HOWARD, Martin, Tennessee, USA Gregory of Nyssa's <i>Vita Macrinae</i> in the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Debate.....	131
Ann CONWAY-JONES, Manchester, UK Gregory of Nyssa's Tabernacle Imagery: Mysticism, Theology and Politics	143
Elena ENE D-VASILESCU, Oxford, UK How Would Gregory of Nyssa Understand Evolutionism?	151
Daniel G. OPPERWALL, Hamilton, Canada Sinai and Corporate Epistemology in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus	169
Finn DAMGAARD, Copenhagen, Denmark The Figure of Moses in Gregory of Nazianzus' Autobiographical Remarks in his Orations and Poems.....	179

Gregory K. HILLIS, Louisville, Kentucky, USA Pneumatology and Soteriology according to Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria	187
Zurab JASHI, Leipzig, Germany Human Freedom and Divine Providence according to Gregory of Nazianzus	199
Matthew BRIEL, Bronx, New York, USA Gregory the Theologian, <i>Logos</i> and Literature	207

THE SECOND HALF OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

John VOELKER, Viking, Minnesota, USA Marius Victorinus' Remembrance of the Nicene Council	217
Kellen PLAXCO, Milwaukee, USA Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation	227
Rubén PERETÓ RIVAS, Mendoza, Argentina La acedia y Evagrio Pónico. Entre ángeles y demonios	239
Young Richard KIM, Grand Rapids, USA The Pastoral Care of Epiphanius of Cyprus	247
Peter Anthony MENA, Madison, NJ, USA Insatiable Appetites: Epiphanius of Salamis and the Making of the Heretical Villain	257
Constantine BOZINIS, Thessaloniki, Greece <i>De imperio et potestate</i> . A Dialogue with John Chrysostom	265
Johan LEEMANS, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Leuven, Belgium John Chrysostom's First Homily on Pentecost (CPG 4343): Liturgy and Theology	285
Natalia SMELOVA, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, Russia St John Chrysostom's Exegesis on the Prophet <i>Isaiah</i> : The Oriental Translations and their Manuscripts	295
Goran SEKULOVSKI, Paris, France Jean Chrysostome sur la communion de Judas	311

Jeff W. CHILDERS, Abilene, Texas, USA
 Chrysostom in Syriac Dress..... 323

Cara J. ASPESI, Notre Dame, USA
 Literacy and Book Ownership in the Congregations of John Chrysostom..... 333

Jonathan STANFILL, New York, USA
 John Chrysostom’s Gothic Parish and the Politics of Space..... 345

Peter MOORE, Sydney, Australia
 Chrysostom’s Concept of γνώμη: How ‘Chosen Life’s Orientation’ Undergirds Chrysostom’s Strategy in Preaching..... 351

Chris L. DE WET, Pretoria, South Africa
 John Chrysostom’s Advice to Slaveholders 359

Paola Francesca MORETTI, Milano, Italy
 Not only *ianua diaboli*. Jerome, the Bible and the Construction of a Female Gender Model..... 367

Vít HUŠEK, Olomouc, Czech Republic
 ‘Perfection Appropriate to the Fragile Human Condition’: Jerome and Pelagius on the Perfection of Christian Life 385

Pak-Wah LAI, Singapore
 The *Imago Dei* and Salvation among the Antiochenes: A Comparison of John Chrysostom with Theodore of Mopsuestia..... 393

George KALANTZIS, Wheaton, Illinois, USA
Creatio ex Terrae: Immortality and the Fall in Theodore, Chrysostom, and Theodoret 403

Volume 16

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXVIII

FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY ONWARDS (GREEK WRITERS)

Anna LANKINA, Gainesville, Florida, USA
 Reclaiming the Memory of the Christian Past: Philostorgius’ Missionary Heroes..... 3

Vasilije VRANIC, Marquette University, USA The Logos as <i>theios sporos</i> : The Christology of the <i>Expositio rectae fidei</i> of Theodoret of Cyrillus	11
Andreas WESTERGREN, Lund, Sweden A Relic <i>In Spe</i> : Theodoret's Depiction of a Philosopher Saint.....	25
George A. BEVAN, Kingston, Canada Interpolations in the Syriac Translation of Nestorius' <i>Liber Heraclidis</i>	31
Ken PARRY, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia 'Rejoice for Me, O Desert': Fresh Light on the Remains of Nestorius in Egypt	41
Josef RIST, Bochum, Germany Kirchenpolitik und/oder Bestechung: Die Geschenke des Kyrill von Alexandrien an den kaiserlichen Hof	51
Hans VAN LOON, Culemborg, The Netherlands The Pelagian Debate and Cyril of Alexandria's Theology	61
Hannah MILNER, Cambridge, UK Cyril of Alexandria's Treatment of Sources in his <i>Commentary on the Twelve Prophets</i>	85
Matthew R. CRAWFORD, Durham, UK Assessing the Authenticity of the Greek Fragments on <i>Psalm 22 (LXX)</i> attributed to Cyril of Alexandria.....	95
Dimitrios ZAGANAS, Paris, France Against Origen and/or Origenists? Cyril of Alexandria's Rejection of John the Baptist's Angelic Nature in his <i>Commentary on John 1:6</i>	101
Richard W. BISHOP, Leuven, Belgium Cyril of Alexandria's Sermon on the Ascension (CPG 5281).....	107
Daniel KEATING, Detroit, MI, USA Supersessionism in Cyril of Alexandria	119
Thomas ARENTZEN, Lund, Sweden 'Your virginity shines' – The Attraction of the Virgin in the <i>Annunciation Hymn</i> by Romanos the Melodist	125
Thomas CATTOI, Berkeley, USA An Evagrian ὑπόστασις? Leontios of Byzantium and the 'Composite Subjectivity' of the Person of Christ.....	133

Leszek MISIARCZYK, Warsaw, Poland The Relationship between <i>nous</i> , <i>pneuma</i> and <i>logistikon</i> in Evagrius Ponticus' Anthropology.....	149
J. Gregory GIVEN, Cambridge, USA Anchoring the Areopagite: An Intertextual Approach to Pseudo-Dionysius	155
Ladislav CHVÁTAL, Olomouc, Czech Republic The Concept of 'Grace' in Dionysius the Areopagite	173
Graciela L. RITACCO, San Miguel, Argentina El Bien, el Sol y el Rayo de Luz según Dionisio del Areópago	181
Zachary M. GUILIANO, Cambridge, UK The Cross in (Pseudo-)Dionysius: Pinnacle and Pit of Revelation	201
David NEWHEISER, Chicago, USA Eschatology and the Areopagite: Interpreting the Dionysian Hierarchies in Terms of Time	215
Ashley PURPURA, New York City, USA 'Pseudo' Dionysius the Areopagite's <i>Ecclesiastical Hierarchy</i> : Keeping the Divine Order and Participating in Divinity	223
Filip IVANOVIC, Trondheim, Norway Dionysius the Areopagite on Justice	231
Brenda LLEWELLYN IHSEN, Tacoma, USA Money in the Meadow: Conversion and Coin in John Moschos' <i>Pratum spirituale</i>	237
Bogdan G. BUCUR, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA Exegesis and Intertextuality in Anastasius the Sinaite's Homily <i>On the Transfiguration</i>	249
Christopher JOHNSON, Tuscaloosa, USA Between Madness and Holiness: Symeon of Emesa and the 'Pedagogics of Liminality'	261
Archbishop Rowan WILLIAMS, London, UK Nature, Passion and Desire: Maximus' Ontology of Excess	267
Manuel MIRA IBORRA, Rome, Italy Friendship in Maximus the Confessor.....	273

Mariusus PORTARU, Rome, Italy	
Gradual Participation according to St Maximus the Confessor.....	281
Michael BAKKER, Amsterdam, The Netherlands	
Willing in St Maximus' Mystagogical Habitat: Bringing Habits in Line with One's <i>logos</i>	295
Andreas ANDREOPOULOS, Winchester, UK	
'All in All' in the Byzantine Anaphora and the Eschatological Mys- tagogy of Maximus the Confessor	303
Cyril K. CRAWFORD, OSB, Leuven, Belgium (†)	
'Receptive Potency' (<i>dektikē dynamis</i>) in <i>Ambigua ad Iohannem</i> 20 of St Maximus the Confessor.....	313
Johannes BÖRJESSON, Cambridge, UK	
Maximus the Confessor's Knowledge of Augustine: An Exploration of Evidence Derived from the <i>Acta</i> of the Lateran Council of 649 ..	325
Joseph STEINEGER, Chicago, USA	
John of Damascus on the Simplicity of God.....	337
Scott ABLES, Oxford, UK	
Did John of Damascus Modify His Sources in the <i>Expositio fidei</i> ? ...	355
Adrian AGACHI, Winchester, UK	
A Critical Analysis of the Theological Conflict between St Symeon the New Theologian and Stephen of Nicomedia.....	363
Vladimir A. BARANOV, Novosibirsk, Russia	
<i>Amphilochia</i> 231 of Patriarch Photius as a Possible Source on the Christology of the Byzantine Iconoclasts	371
Theodoros ALEXOPOULOS, Athens, Greece	
The Byzantine <i>Filioque</i> -Supporters in the 13 th Century John Bekkos and Konstantin Melitiniotes and their Relation with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.....	381
Nicholas BAMFORD, St Albans, UK	
Using Gregory Palamas' Energetic Theology to Address John Ziziou- las' Existentialism	397
John BEKOS, Nicosia, Cyprus	
Nicholas Cabasilas' Political Theology in an Epoch of Economic Crisis: A Reading of a 14 th -Century Political Discourse	405

Volume 17

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXIX

LATIN WRITERS

Dennis Paul QUINN, Pomona, California, USA In the Names of God and His Christ: Evil Daemons, Exorcism, and Conversion in Firmicus Maternus.....	3
Stanley P. ROSENBERG, Oxford, UK Nature and the Natural World in Ambrose's <i>Hexaemeron</i>	15
Brian DUNKLE, S.J., South Bend, USA Mystagogy and Creed in Ambrose's <i>Iam Surgit Hora Tertia</i>	25
Finbarr G. CLANCY, S.J., Dublin, Ireland The Eucharist in St Ambrose's Commentaries on the <i>Psalms</i>	35
Jan DEN BOEFT, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands <i>Qui cantat, vacuus est</i> : Ambrose on singing	45
Crystal LUBINSKY, University of Edinburgh, UK Re-reading Masculinity in Christian Greco-Roman Culture through Ambrose and the Female Transvestite Monk, Matrona of Perge.....	51
Maria E. DOERFLER, Durham, USA Keeping it in the Family: The law and the Law in Ambrose of Milan's Letters	67
Camille GERZAGUET, Lyon, France <i>Le De fuga saeculi</i> d'Ambroise de Milan et sa datation. Notes de philologie et d'histoire.....	75
Vincenzo MESSANA, Palermo, Italia Fra Sicilia e Burdigala nel IV secolo: gli intellettuali Citario e Vit- torio (Ausonius, <i>Prof.</i> 13 e 22)	85
Edmon L. GALLAGHER, Florence, Alabama, USA Jerome's <i>Prologus Galeatus</i> and the OT Canon of North Africa.....	99
Christine McCANN, Northfield, VT, USA Incentives to Virtue: Jerome's Use of Biblical Models	107
Christa GRAY, Oxford, UK The Monk and the Ridiculous: Comedy in Jerome's <i>Vita Malchi</i>	115

Zachary YUZWA, Cornell University, USA To Live by the Example of Angels: Dialogue, Imitation and Identity in Sulpicius Severus' <i>Gallus</i>	123
Robert McEACHNIE, Gainesville, USA Envisioning the Utopian Community in the Sermons of Chromatius of Aquileia.....	131
Hernán M. GIUDICE, Buenos Aires, Argentina El Papel del Apóstol Pablo en la Propuesta Priscilianista	139
Bernard GREEN, Oxford, UK Leo the Great on Baptism: <i>Letter</i> 16.....	149
Fabian SIEBER, Leuven, Belgium Christologische Namen und Titel in der <i>Paraphrase des Johannes- Evangeliums</i> des Nonnos von Panopolis	159
Junghoo KWON, Toronto, Canada The Latin Pseudo-Athanasian <i>De trinitate</i> Attributed to Eusebius of Vercelli and its Place of Composition: Spain or Northern Italy?	169
Salvatore COSTANZA, Agrigento, Italia Cartagine in Salviano di Marsiglia: alcune puntualizzazioni.....	175
Giulia MARCONI, Perugia, Italy <i>Commendatio</i> in Ostrogothic Italy: Studies on the Letters of Enno- dius of Pavia	187
Lucy GRIG, Edinburgh, UK Approaching Popular Culture in Late Antiquity: Singing in the Ser- mons of Caesarius of Arles.....	197
Thomas S. FERGUSON, Riverdale, New York, USA Grace and Kingship in <i>De aetatibus mundi et hominis</i> of Planciades Fulgentius	205
Jérémy DELMULLE, Paris, France Establishing an Authentic List of Prosper's Works.....	213
Albertus G.A. HORSTING, Notre Dame, USA Reading Augustine with Pleasure: The Original Form of Prosper of Aquitaine's <i>Book of Epigrams</i>	233

Michele CUTINO, Palermo, Italy Prosper and the Pagans	257
Norman W. JAMES, St Albans, UK Prosper of Aquitaine Revisited: Gallic Friend of Leo I or Resident Papal Adviser?.....	267
Alexander Y. HWANG, Louisville, USA Prosper of Aquitaine and the Fall of Rome.....	277
Brian J. MATZ, Helena, USA Legacy of Prosper of Aquitaine in the Ninth-Century Predestination Debate	283
Raúl VILLEGAS MARÍN, Paris, France, and Barcelona, Spain Original Sin in the Provençal Ascetic Theology: John Cassian	289
Pere MAYMÓ I CAPDEVILA, Barcelona, Spain A Bishop Faces War: Gregory the Great's Attitude towards Ariulf's Campaign on Rome (591-592).....	297
Hector SCERRI, Msida, Malta Life as a Journey in the Letters of Gregory the Great.....	305
Theresia HAINTHALER, Frankfurt am Main, Germany Canon 13 of the Second Council of Seville (619) under Isidore of Seville. A Latin Anti-Monophysite Treatise	311

NACHLEBEN

Gerald CRESTA, Buenos Aires, Argentine From Dionysius' <i>thearchia</i> to Bonaventure's <i>hierarchia</i> : Assimilation and Evolution of the Concept.....	325
Lesley-Anne DYER, Notre Dame, USA The Twelfth-Century Influence of Hilary of Poitiers on Richard of St Victor's <i>De trinitate</i>	333
John T. SLOTEMAKER, Boston, USA Reading Augustine in the Fourteenth Century: Gregory of Rimini and Pierre d'Ailly on the <i>Imago Trinitatis</i>	345

Jeffrey C. WITT, Boston, USA Interpreting Augustine: On the Nature of ‘Theological Knowledge’ in the Fourteenth Century.....	359
Joost VAN ROSSUM, Paris, France Creation-Theology in Gregory Palamas and Theophanes of Nicaea, Compatible or Incompatible?	373
Yilun CAI, Leuven, Belgium The Appeal to Augustine in Domingo Bañez’ Theology of Effica- cious Grace	379
Elizabeth A. CLARK, Durham, USA Romanizing Protestantism in Nineteenth-Century America: John Williamson Nevin, the Fathers, and the ‘Mercersburg Theology’	385
Pier Franco BEATRICE, University of Padua, Italy Reading Elizabeth A. Clark, <i>Founding the Fathers</i>	395
Kenneth NOAKES, Wimborne, Dorset, UK ‘Fellow Citizens with you and your Great Benefactors’: Newman and the Fathers in the Parochial Sermons	401
Manuela E. GHEORGHE, Olomouc, Czech Republic The Reception of Hesychia in Romanian Literature.....	407
Jason RADCLIFF, Edinburgh, UK Thomas F. Torrance’s Conception of the <i>Consensus patrum</i> on the Doctrine of Pneumatology	417
Andrew LENOX-CONYNGHAM, Birmingham, UK In Praise of St Jerome and Against the Anglican Cult of ‘Niceness’	435

Volume 18

STUDIA PATRISTICA LXX

ST AUGUSTINE AND HIS OPPONENTS

Kazuhiko DEMURA, Okayama, Japan The Concept of Heart in Augustine of Hippo: Its Emergence and Development	3
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Therese FUHRER, Berlin, Germany The ‘Milan narrative’ in Augustine’s <i>Confessions</i> : Intellectual and Material Spaces in Late Antique Milan	17
Kenneth M. WILSON, Oxford, UK Sin as Contagious in the Writings of Cyprian and Augustine.....	37
Marius A. VAN WILLIGEN, Tilburg, The Netherlands Ambrose’s <i>De paradiso</i> : An Inspiring Source for Augustine of Hippo	47
Ariane MAGNY, Kamloops, Canada How Important were Porphyry’s Anti-Christian Ideas to Augustine?	55
Jonathan D. TEUBNER, Cambridge, UK Augustine’s <i>De magistro</i> : Scriptural Arguments and the Genre of Philosophy	63
Marie-Anne VANNIER, Université de Lorraine-MSH Lorraine, France La mystagogie chez S. Augustin.....	73
Joseph T. LIENHARD, S.J., Bronx, New York, USA <i>Locutio</i> and <i>sensus</i> in Augustine’s Writings on the Heptateuch.....	79
Laela ZWOLLO, Centre for Patristic Research, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands St Augustine on the Soul’s Divine Experience: <i>Visio intellectualis</i> and <i>Imago dei</i> from Book XII of <i>De genesi ad litteram libri XII</i>	85
Enrique A. EGUIARTE, Madrid, Spain The Exegetical Function of Old Testament Names in Augustine’s <i>Commentary on the Psalms</i>	93
Mickaël RIBREAU, Paris, France À la frontière de plusieurs controverses doctrinales: <i>L’Enarratio au</i> <i>Psaume 118</i> d’Augustin	99
Wendy ELGERSMA HELLEMAN, Plateau State, Nigeria Augustine and Philo of Alexandria’s ‘Sarah’ as a Wisdom Figure (<i>De</i> <i>Civitate Dei</i> XV 2f.; XVI 25-32)	105
Paul VAN GEEST, Tilburg and Amsterdam, The Netherlands St Augustine on God’s Incomprehensibility, Incarnation and the Authority of St John.....	117

Piotr M. PACIOREK, Miami, USA The Metaphor of ‘the Letter from God’ as Applied to Holy Scripture by Saint Augustine	133
John Peter KENNEY, Colchester, Vermont, USA Apophysis and Interiority in Augustine’s Early Writings	147
Karl F. MORRISON, Princeton, NJ, USA Augustine’s Project of Self-Knowing and the Paradoxes of Art: An Experiment in Biblical Hermeneutics	159
Tarmo TOOM, Washington, D.C., USA Was Augustine an Intentionalist? Authorial Intention in Augustine’s Hermeneutics	185
Francine CARDMAN, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA Discerning the Heart: Intention as Ethical Norm in Augustine’s <i>Homilies on 1 John</i>	195
Samuel KIMBRIEL, Cambridge, UK Illumination and the Practice of Inquiry in Augustine	203
Susan Blackburn GRIFFITH, Oxford, UK Unwrapping the Word: Metaphor in the Augustinian Imagination...	213
Paula J. ROSE, Amsterdam, The Netherlands ‘ <i>Videbit me nocte proxima, sed in somnis</i> ’: Augustine’s Rhetorical Use of Dream Narratives.....	221
Jared ORTIZ, Washington, D.C., USA The Deep Grammar of Augustine’s Conversion	233
Emmanuel BERMON, University of Bordeaux, France Grammar and Metaphysics: About the Forms <i>essendi, essendo,</i> <i>essendum,</i> and <i>essens</i> in Augustine’s <i>Ars grammatica breuiata</i> (IV, 31 Weber)	241
Gerald P. BOERSMA, Durham, UK Enjoying the Trinity in <i>De uera religione</i>	251
Emily CAIN, New York, NY, USA Knowledge Seeking Wisdom: A Pedagogical Pattern for Augustine’s <i>De trinitate</i>	257

Michael L. CARREKER, Macon, Georgia, USA The Integrity of Christ's <i>Scientia</i> and <i>Sapientia</i> in the Argument of the <i>De trinitate</i> of Augustine	265
Dongsun CHO, Fort Worth, Texas, USA An Apology for Augustine's <i>Filioque</i> as a Hermeneutical Referent to the Immanent Trinity	275
Ronnie J. ROMBS, Dallas, USA The Grace of Creation and Perfection as Key to Augustine's <i>Confes- sions</i>	285
Matthias SMALBRUGGE, Amsterdam, The Netherlands Image as a Hermeneutic Model in <i>Confessions X</i>	295
Naoki KAMIMURA, Tokyo, Japan The Consultation of Sacred Books and the Mediator: The <i>Sortes</i> in Augustine	305
Eva-Maria KUHN, Munich, Germany Listening to the Bishop: A Note on the Construction of Judicial Authority in <i>Confessions VI 3-5</i>	317
Jangho JO, Waco, USA Augustine's Three-Day Lecture in Carthage	331
Alicia EELEN, Leuven, Belgium <i>1Tim. 1:15: Humanus sermo</i> or <i>Fidelis sermo</i> ? Augustine's <i>Sermo</i> 174 and its Christology	339
Han-luen KANTZER KOMLINE, South Bend, IN, USA ' <i>Ut in illo uiueremus</i> ': Augustine on the Two Wills of Christ	347
George C. BERTHOLD, Manchester, New Hampshire, USA Dyothelite Language in Augustine's Christology	357
Chris THOMAS, Central University College, Accra, Ghana Donatism and the Contextualisation of Christianity: A Cautionary Tale	365
Jane E. MERDINGER, Incline Village, Nevada, USA Before Augustine's Encounter with Emeritus: Early Mauretanian Donatism	371

James K. LEE, Southern Methodist University, TX, USA The Church as Mystery in the Theology of St Augustine	381
Charles D. ROBERTSON, Houston, USA Augustinian Ecclesiology and Predestination: An Intractable Problem?	401
Brian GRONEWOLLER, Atlanta, USA Felicianus, Maximianism, and Augustine's Anti-Donatist Polemic...	409
Marianne DJUTH, Canisius College, Buffalo, New York, USA Augustine on the Saints and the Community of the Living and the Dead.....	419
Bart VAN EGMOND, Kampen, The Netherlands Perseverance until the End in Augustine's Anti-Donatist Polemic ...	433
Carles BUENACASA PÉREZ, Barcelona, Spain The Letters <i>Ad Donatistas</i> of Augustine and their Relevance in the Anti-Donatist Controversy	439
Ron HAFLIDSON, Edinburgh, UK Imitation and the Mediation of Christ in Augustine's <i>City of God</i> ...	449
Julia HUDSON, Oxford, UK Leaves, Mice and Barbarians: The Providential Meaning of Incidents in the <i>De ordine</i> and <i>De ciuitate Dei</i>	457
Shari BOODTS, Leuven, Belgium A Critical Assessment of Wolfenbüttel Herz.-Aug.-Bibl. <i>Cod. Guelf. 237 (Helmst. 204)</i> and its Value for the Edition of St Augustine's <i>Sermones ad populum</i>	465
Lenka KARFÍKOVÁ, Prague, Czech Republic Augustine to Nebridius on the Ideas of Individuals (<i>ep. 14,4</i>).....	477
Pierre DESCOTES, Paris, France Deux lettres sur l'origine de l'âme: Les <i>Epistulae</i> 166 et 190 de saint Augustin.....	487
Nicholas J. BAKER-BRIAN, Cardiff, Wales, UK Women in Augustine's Anti-Manichaean Writings: Rumour, Rhetoric, and Ritual.....	499

Michael W. TKACZ, Spokane, Washington, USA Occasionalism and Augustine's Builder Analogy for Creation.....	521
Kelly E. ARENSON, Pittsburgh, USA Augustine's Defense and Redemption of the Body	529
Catherine LEFORT, Paris, France À propos d'une source inédite des <i>Soliloques</i> d'Augustin: La notion cicéronienne de «vraisemblance» (<i>uerisimile / similitudo ueri</i>).....	539
Kenneth B. STEINHAUSER, St Louis, Missouri, USA Curiosity in Augustine's <i>Soliloquies</i> : <i>Agitur enim de sanitate oculo- rum tuorum</i>	547
Frederick H. RUSSELL, Newark, New Jersey USA Augustine's Contradictory Just War.....	553
Kimberly F. BAKER, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, USA <i>Transfiguravit in se</i> : The Sacramentality of Augustine's Doctrine of the <i>Totus Christus</i>	559
Mark G. VAILLANCOURT, New York, USA The Eucharistic Realism of St Augustine: Did Paschasius Radbertus Get Him Right? An Examination of Recent Scholarship on the Ser- mons of St Augustine	569
Martin BELLEROSE, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombie Le sens pétrinien du mot <i>παροιικός</i> comme source de l'idée augus- tinienne de <i>peregrinus</i>	577
Gertrude GILLETTE, Ave Maria, USA Anger and Community in the <i>Rule</i> of Augustine.....	591
Robert HORKA, Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology, Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia <i>Curiositas ductrix</i> : Die negative und positive Beziehung des hl. Augustinus zur Neugierde.....	601
Paige E. HOCHSCHILD, Mount St Mary's University, USA Unity of Memory in <i>De musica</i> VI.....	611
Ali BONNER, Cambridge, UK The Manuscript Transmission of Pelagius' <i>Ad Demetriadem</i> : The Evidence of Some Manuscript Witnesses.....	619

Peter J. VAN EGMOND, Amsterdam, The Netherlands	
Pelagius and the Origenist Controversy in Palestine.....	631
Rafał TOCZKO, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland	
Rome as the Basis of Argument in the So-called Pelagian Controversy (415-418).....	649
Nozomu YAMADA, Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan	
The Influence of Chromatius and Rufinus of Aquileia on Pelagius – as seen in his Key Ascetic Concepts: <i>exemplum Christi, sapientia</i> and <i>imperturbabilitas</i>	661
Matthew J. PEREIRA, New York, USA	
From Augustine to the Scythian Monks: Social Memory and the Doctrine of Predestination	671