
Conference Report: ‘The Pattern and the Image: Insights from the Alexandrian Exegetical Tradition’

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The international patristic conference entitled *The Pattern and the Image: Insights from the Alexandrian Exegetical Tradition* took place in Prague on 17–18 November 2022. The conference was held under the auspices of the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University and the Czech Patristic Society, and the venue was the Vratislav Hall of the Royal Collegiate Chapter of Sts Peter and Paul in Vyšehrad.

The organisers intended to introduce the topic of the relationship between pattern and image somewhat more widely than just on patristic ground and to explore its roots in both the Greek philosophical and Jewish Hellenistic traditions. On the first day of the conference, the programme opened with two papers on the theme of ‘pattern and image’ in Plato and Plotinus (Ondřej Krása, ‘World as an Image in Plato’, and Ota Gál, ‘The Pattern and the Image in Plotinus: Plato’s Heritage’), addressing possible reasons for referring to the sense-perceptible world as an image in Plato and exploring the continuity of Plato’s and Plotinus’ thought in relation to art. Thematically, this section culminated in Prof. Lenka Karfíková’s lecture, ‘The Iconic Structure of Reality in the Platonic Tradition and Its Christian Reinterpretation’, in which the motifs associated with the concepts of image and simile were brought from Plato and Plotinus to the 3rd and 4th century Christian authors Origen, Athanasius of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nazianzus.

In the afternoon session, three papers first presented partial aspects of the same theme in the Jewish tradition, especially in Philo of Alexandria (Marcela Andoková, ‘Moses as the Model of a Hellenistic King in Ezekiel the Tragedian’, Adrián Flores Lopez, ‘The “Human Body” in Philo’s Interpretation of Gen 1–3: A Testimony to the Polysemy of Images in his Allegorical Exegesis’, and Markéta Dudziková, ‘The Image Ascending to Its Archetype according to Philo of Alexandria’); the papers were devoted to the Jewish dramatisation of Moses after the model of Hellenistic kings, the multiple meanings of the term ‘image’ in Philo, and, in the same author, the relation of the human mind to the intelligible and uncreated, which makes possible the ascent of the mind through the world to God. Then Gregory E. Sterling, in his lecture ‘Day One and the Intelligible World: An Alexandrian Exegetical Tradition?’ explored the identification of the intelligible world with the ‘one day’ of Gen. 1:5 in the Alexandrian tradition, especially in Clement, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea. In the evening session of the first day of the conference, four papers addressed

issues of the concept of image in Clement and Origen, authors belonging to the Alexandrian exegetical tradition of the 3rd century, as well as in the work of Gregory of Nyssa (Pierluigi Banna, 'The Copy and the Revelation. Protagonists and Contents of partial truths in Clement of Alexandria', Sincero Mantelli, "'Servant mysterium Trinitatis'. The Role of Seraphim (Is 6, 2–5) in Concealing and Revealing the Nature of God in the Origenian Work and its Sources', Matteo Monfrinotti, 'Εἰκὼν and ὁμοίωσις in the Anthropology of Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa. Theological Convergence?'. and Pavel Dudzik, 'Origen of Alexandria and His Use of Prov 8: 22–25 LXX'); they concerned the relationship between Christian truth and the partial truth of non-Christians in Clement of Alexandria, Origen's interpretation of the prophet's vision of the two Seraphs interpreted according to the Trinitarian key, the concept of image and likeness in the anthropology of Clement and Gregory, and the name Divine Wisdom from Prov 8:22 as a summary of the patterns of future creation in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John.

The second conference day began with a return to the Philonic theme, namely Philo's concept of image and pattern and its reception in early Christian thought, in a keynote by Justin M. Rogers, 'The Reception of Philo's *De Opificio Mundi* 15–25 in Alexandrian Christianity'; Rogers examined Philo's view of the Logos as the mediating power that creates the sensible world according to patterns understood as divine and the reception of this view in Clement, Origen, and Didymus the Blind. Then there were papers on the 4th century authors Pseudo-Athanasius, Ambrose of Milan and Gregory of Nyssa (Viacheslav V. Lytvynenko, 'From Created Realities to Prototypes: Ambrose's Concept of Creation', David Vopřada: 'World as an Idea and Reality: Ambrose's Concept of Creation', Magdalena Marunová, 'The Pattern and the Image in Gregory of Nyssa's Searching for the Perfect Virtue'), the first paper of which compared the use of the exegetical method proceeding from created realities to prototypes in the Pseudo-Athanasian *Disputatio contra Arium* and in authentic Athanasius' *Orationes contra Arianos*, the second focused on Ambrose's concept of creation, according to which the visible world is an image of the invisible and heavenly world as reality, and reflected on the value that Ambrose attributes to the created world and to the existence and history of humanity; the third paper focused on the theme of the Names of Christ and the role of participation in them in the pursuit of human perfection. In the last, afternoon session, the participants spoke (in contrast to the program in English) on the Latin terminology in Augustine (interpretive and translational possibilities of the term *Word/verbum*) and on the Trinitarian aspects evident in the figure of the Virgin Mary in Gregory of Nyssa (Róbert Horka, 'Latin Equivalents of the Term *Logos/Verbum* and their Interpretative Meaning in the Sermons of Trinitarian Features of God's Image in Man in Gregory of Nyssa', Petr Havlík, 'Mary and the Trinity: Trinitarian Features of God's Image in Man in Gregory of Nyssa').

The conference brought partial, detailed contributions on the theme of 'pattern and image' in cosmological, Christological and anthropological contexts,

as well as summarising lectures on this important concept, consistently present in the thought of many pre-Christian, Jewish, and early Christian authors. It was an opportunity to trace the transformations of this concept and its concrete forms in different authors on a rather long timeline. Equally importantly, over this broad unifying theme, it facilitated personal encounters among scholars working in the fields of patristics, philosophy, and Biblical studies from four countries.

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