

Dimitrios Zaganas: *L'Hexaameron* d'Anastase le Sinaïte. Son authenticité, ses sources et son exégèse allégorisante. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2022 (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 172). XIII, 289 p. € 138.03. ISBN: 978-90-04-47246-4.

As the title announces, the book is divided into three parts respectively dealing with the authenticity (pp. 5–76), the sources (pp. 77–162) and the exegetical method (pp. 163–229) of Anastasius of Sinai's commentary on the six days of creation. As a whole Dimitrios Zaganas's work is a significant contribution towards a better understanding of this important commentary, in twelve books, on the six days of creation. The Greek text was edited for the first time in 2007 with an English translation by Clement A. Kuehn and John D. Baggarly.¹ As the editors themselves admitted, this *editio princeps* is somehow preliminary and Clement A. Kuehn promised a revised edition.² Appendix 1 in the present book provides a rather long list of corrigenda to the edition.

In the first part Dimitrios Zaganas argues that the *Hexaameron* (CPG 7770) was written by Anastasius of Sinai probably around 700 (p. 76). Zaganas convincingly refutes all the arguments against the attribution of the commentary to Anastasius of Sinai and shows that there are strong parallels and cross-references between the *Hexaameron* and Anastasius' genuine works, which would be difficult to explain if Anastasius of Sinai were not the author of the *Hexaameron*.

In the second part Zaganas makes a remarkable work trying to find the sources of Anastasius' *Hexaameron*. In Kuehn's and Baggarly's edition only the biblical sources were mentioned in the apparatus (without any index). Amongst the explicit references to previous authors only the ones to Gregory of Nazianzus are exact quotations (pp. 82–85), the others are more difficult to recognise, misleading or even fictitious (“invraisemblables”) (pp. 108–127). For that reason and because so much was lost from the literature of the first millennium, most of the explicit references to previous

1 Anastasius of Sinai: *Hexaameron*. Edited and translated by C. A. Kuehn and J. D. Baggarly. With a foreword by J. A. Munitiz. Roma 2007 (*Orientalia Christiana analecta* 278).

2 <https://www.anastasiosofsinai.org/the-creation-project.html> (accessed on 31 July 2024).

authors made by Anastasius are not to be identified with any certainty (pp. 128–142). The case of Origen (pp. 87–91), whose commentary on *Genesis* is lost, is very complex, because Anastasius denigrated Origen’s exegesis, considered heretical, but at the same time was influenced by it in his allegorical interpretation of the Bible (cf. third part of the book in general, and especially pp. 176–181). Amongst the implicit borrowings or parallel passages in the *Hexaemeron* Zaganas could identify the following (often identified by others before him): *Carmina theogonica*, an anonymous doxographer, John Lydus, Asterius, Origen, Maximus Confessor, Ps.-Athanasius (pp. 143–158).

The third part studies the exegetical method used by Anastasius in the *Hexaemeron*. The first chapter (Chapter 7 in the book, pp. 166–182) examines the prologue of the commentary, in which Anastasius warned against a literary and scientific reading of *Genesis* (p. 167), such as the one adopted by Basil of Caesarea. The prologue may show traces of a polemic against George of Pisidia’s poem on the hexaemeron (p. 167).³ Zaganas gives examples of Anastasius’s method, largely inspired by the Alexandrine exegetical method (Philo, Origen). As Zaganas notes (p. 54, n. 3), the prologue of the *Hexaemeron* is a highly rhetorical piece. It would deserve a more thorough literary analysis, also because it seems unparalleled in Anastasius’ preserved work and it is full with very rare and elaborate expressions. It is clearly addressed to someone (ed. Kuehn/Baggarly, I, lines 9–14):

Ἄγαμένός σε τοίνυν, ὃ ἐμοῦ πολυποθήτου γόνου καὶ πάντων μοι ἐρασμιωτέρα κορυφή, τῆς φιλεμμελοῦς περὶ τὰ θεῖα σπουδῆς καὶ φιλενσόφου περὶ τὸν Λόγον διανοίας, ὡς σεαυτὸν τὸν ἔμψυχον χαρακτῆρα τοῦ σώματος δέδεγμαί σου τὸν ἄψυχον χάρτην τοῦ γράμματος αἰτοῦντα περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ ἑξαήμερῳ πολλοῖς ἀπορομένων τὴν λύσιν ποιήσασθαι.

Who is this ἐμοῦ πολυποθήτου γόνου καὶ πάντων μοι ἐρασμιωτέρα κορυφή, “pinnacle by me more loved than my much-desired offspring and everything”, who sent a letter to Anastasius to ask him questions about the *Genesis*?⁴ Of course

3 On that poem and its political implications see now D. Pleshak: Animals and Ideology in George of Pisidia’s *Hexameron*. In: O. Hellmann/A. Zucker (eds.): On the Diffusion of Zoological Knowledge in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period. Trier 2023 (AKAN-Einzelschriften 14), pp. 103–116.

4 I suppose that the words τῆς φιλεμμελοῦς περὶ τὰ θεῖα σπουδῆς καὶ φιλενσόφου περὶ τὸν Λόγον διανοίας depend from κορυφή (after which the comma should be removed): “pinnacle of the zeal to sing the divine and of the philosophical thinking about the Logos”. Note that both φιλεμμελής (Trapp: “eifrig bedacht”) and φιλένσοφος (Trapp:

this could be a rhetorical device, but why then makes it so personal by pretending that this person is very dear to him? At the end of the prologue the intended audience is made more general (ed. Kuehn/Baggarly, I, lines 177–180):

Εἰ δ' ὅτι καὶ νέον ὅσον κατὰ τὴν συνήθειαν ὁ λόγος ἔρει, δεόμεθα καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν τοὺς τε παρόντας τοὺς τε μεθ' ἡμᾶς τῆς ἀγίας ἐκκλησίας υἱοὺς μὴ ἐχθρωδῶς καὶ φθονερῶς καὶ κακοθελῶς τῶν λεγομένων ἀκοῦσαι, ἀλλ' ἀδελφικῶς.

“But if my speech shall say something new in comparison to the custom, we ask and we beg those present and the sons of the Church after us to listen to what we said not in a hostile, jealous and ill-minded way, but in a brotherly way.”⁵

Every detail of this complex prologue should be studied, which is not the purpose of the present review and is somehow missing in Zaganas’s book. Such a study should not be confined to a theological point of view, but should interrogate every aspect of the prologue as a literary work, as it may shed a somewhat different light on the questions of the author and of his intentions. I only mention in passing that the analogies which Anastasius draws there with the ant, the dog and the bee cannot be fortuitous,⁶ whereas in the rest of his commentary he shows very little interest in the creatures of Genesis (except for humankind), contrary to what Basil of Caesarea does.⁷

“die Weisheit liebend”) are *bapax legomena* or almost (φιλένσοφος is found in twelfth-century poetry). In the prologue even more than in the rest of the commentary the limitations of Kuehn’s and Baggarly’s edition and, most of all, translation are evident.

- 5 Cf. Anastasius Sinaita: *Viae Dux*, cuius editionem curavit K.-H. Uthemann. Turnhout/Leuven 1981 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 8), XXII, 1, lines 20–23, for the use of the same relatively rare adverb κακοθελῶς (in the TLG out of 40 occurrences, 16 are found in the *Basilica*): Καὶ τοῦτο εὐθέως κατάδηλον ποιῆσαι πειράσομαι διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας ἐπιλαβέσθαι κακοθελῶς τῆσδε ἡμῶν τῆς ἐχθέσεως, ὣν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικον καὶ ἡ κόλασις ἀπαραίτητος.
- 6 Ed. Kuehn/Baggarly, I, Lines 20–23: καὶ ἐπικαλαμώμενος μυρμηκοφυῆς τοὺς διαλαθόντας στάχους ἀνακαλέσομαι. Ἡ καὶ ὡς ψυχολόγος κύων τῆς παντοδαπούς καὶ ἀνελλιπούς καὶ ἀνυστερήτου τῶν Πατέρων τραπεζοποιῶν πανδαισίας τὰ ἀποπίπτοντα ἀφαιροῦμαι. Compare with Léontios de Néapolis: *Vie de Syméon le Fou* et *Vie de Jean de Chypre*. Édition commentée par A.-J. Festugière et L. Rydén. Paris 1974 (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 95), p. 344, lines 31–35: καὶ ἡμεῖς τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον τὰ λείψανα τὰ τοὺς ἡμετέρους κυρίους λεληθότα ψυχολογοῦμεν· καὶ τοὺς στάχους τοὺς ὑπὸ τῶν καλῶν τούτων τοῦ κυρίου ἔργατῶν καταλειφθέντας ἀνακαλούμενοι τοῦ λέγειν ἀρξώμεθα, ταῖς τοῦ ποιμένου τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀληθινοῦ τούτου εὐχαῖς θαρρήσαντες.
- 7 On Basil’s commentary see now D. De Brasi: Basil of Caesarea’s *Homilies on the Six Days of Creation*: Scientific Transfer and Moral Education between Aristotle and the

Little attention is paid in the book to the manuscript tradition of the *Hexaemeron*, as it was not Zaganas's aim to deal with it and the manuscript tradition is very late: there is almost nothing before the sixteenth century (this is of course not exceptional, but still intriguing). The manuscripts are taken into account in the discussion of the title of the work (pp. 23–24) and in the distinction between the prologue and the first λόγος (p. 54). Appendix 2 provides a list of digitised Greek manuscripts and ancient editions of the Latin translation of the *Hexaemeron* and Appendix 3 lists the Greek manuscripts mentioned in the book according (mostly but not consistently) to their Latin names. These two appendices are not really useful: the ancient editions are discussed pp. 8–11 and the list in appendix does not bring any new information; the two lists of manuscripts are equally uninformative, in addition they are partly overlapping, do not replace an index of manuscripts, and the links to the images of the manuscripts would have been more adequately substituted by the *diktyon* numbers.⁸ The fourth appendix is listing the six scholia on the *Sermones de creatione hominis* (CPG 7747–7749) discussed on pp. 33–38. Again, I do not see what this appendix can be useful for.

Three indices are provided: biblical, of “sources” (in fact of the ancient works referred to in the book, including an extensive index of the passages from Anastasius' *Hexaemeron* discussed in the book), and of Greek terms. At the risk of sounding pedantic, I find a bit unpractical that the titles of works without an author are sometimes preceded by the definite article and therefore indexed under that article: “La chaîne sur la Genèse” and “Les constitutions apostoliques” are indexed under “L”, “The Book of Jubilees” is indexed under “T” (like the “Trophées de Damas”); the same happens in the bibliography. I have another pedantic comment to make about the references to Gregory of Nazianzus' sermons, which are an important source for Anastasius, as Zaganas highlighted (pp. 82–83). Although *Orationes* 31, 36, 38 and 39 are all available in *Sources Chrétiennes* (SC), the references to these homilies are sometimes to that edition and sometimes to the *Patrologia Graeca* (PG), without any apparent logic; *Oratio* 7 (edited in SC vol. 405, mentioned in the bibliography, p. 248) is quoted according to Fernand Boulenger's edition (1908), which is basically the same text as in PG (p. 84, n. 27).

Bible. In: O. Hellmann/A. Zucker (eds.): On the Diffusion of Zoological Knowledge in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period. Trier 2023 (AKAN-Einzelschriften 14), pp. 37–58.

8 Cf. <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>.

Even if much remains to be done on Anastasius' *Hexaemeron*, the present book is an indispensable and ground-breaking step forward.

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