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### "I Said, You Are Gods": Pastoral Motives Manifest in Patristic Citations of Psalm 82:6

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“I SAID, YOU ARE GODS”:  
PASTORAL MOTIVES MANIFEST IN PATRISTIC CITATIONS OF PSALM 82:6

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A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of History  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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By  
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October 22, 2020

Approved by:

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Dissertation Advisor

David Maxwell

Reader

Thomas Egger

Reader

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À Elisa, minha companheira de vida, apoiadora de todo o meu trabalho

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## PREFACE

Pastors desire to proclaim Christ through teaching the Bible. Many, in fact, would describe their goal as no less than teaching the whole Bible, “the whole counsel of God,” as Paul puts it (Acts 20:27 NIV). For many, it is a point of honor to embrace the whole Scripture as the revealed Word of God, all of which is—again in the words of St. Paul—“profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

But for many today, particularly in the western Christian tradition and perhaps especially among Protestants, one verse remains largely idle in the pastoral proclamation of Christ. This is true even though the verse sits uncontested in the manuscript tradition of the Scriptures. It is found in none other than the book of Psalms, a favorite book for Christians of all ages. The passage is also cited in the New Testament, quoted by none other than the Lord Jesus himself. Furthermore, when he cites it, he underscores its veracity with the observation that “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Yet, for most pastors today, the verse sits unemployed, without any clear or practical message for the church of our day.

The passage is Ps. 82:6 (81:6 LXX): “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High.”

It was not always so. In the early centuries of the church, this text enjoyed frequent citation and served a plethora of purposes. In inter-religious dialogue with Judaism, Christians used it to clarify the claims of Christianity. In contention with heretics, it served to distinguish the true God and his true Son and his true Spirit from the lesser “gods,” whether legitimately or illegitimately so titled. In catechizing new Christians, it promised them an exalted status conferred either in baptism or at the end of ascetic training or in the glory to come. In preaching to the faithful, it provided strong grounds for the exhortation that Christians were to live

differently from the world around them. In the worship of the congregational assembly, it led the charge to give praise to Christ for the indescribable magnitude of the salvation he had accomplished. And this is just a sampling of the verse's purposes.

Today references to this passage appear most frequently in scholarly literature, often because of its significance for the development of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of theosis.<sup>1</sup> The last few decades have indeed witnessed excellent studies on the development of this teaching in the early church and even a few studies have explored its foundation in Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). While this sort of scholarly research is clearly useful in itself and does bring the passage to the broader attention of the church, it also suggests that its only function, either then or now, is to underwrite a doctrine of deification. For some, who may judge that such a teaching undermines their own confessional commitment, that simply justifies their instinct to avoid the verse altogether.

What yet deserves attention is the various pastoral motivations which brought this passage to serve a range of needs in the early church. As Andrew Purves quips: "The great pastors were theologians, and the great theologians were pastors."<sup>2</sup> Each pastoral use of the passage by a Father of the church exemplifies its potential, and many of those uses, when evaluated today, disarm those who are wary of its employ. Like Irenaeus's famed tiles which constitute the mosaic of the face of the King, these exegetical moments in the patristic period occur in a Christian framework and under the guidance of the grand narrative ("hypothesis") of Scripture. By surveying this exegetical history of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), pastors and teachers of the church

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of terminological clarity, I will endeavor to differentiate the post-Palamas Eastern Orthodox doctrine of "theosis" from the early Christian teaching about "deification." "Divinization" may best serve to indicate a developed, distinctively western teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 2.

today may find themselves inspired to consider what we have been overlooking in the text in which God tells us, “You are gods.” It may yet prove a “profitable” word, also for our time.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Book of Hebrews admonishes us to “remember your leaders, who spoke to you the Word of God” (Heb. 13:7). This project represents the fruit born in my own life from the patient, loving, and wise work of faithful teachers of the Word. As first among those whose influence and gifts were most closely related to this effort, I would like to acknowledge the late Jakob Heckert, who taught me Greek at Concordia University, Ann Arbor. I would like to thank George Pepe, who taught me Latin at Washington University in St. Louis; Judith Kovacs and Robert Wilken, who gave me my initial grounding in Patristics at the University of Virginia; and Joel Elowsky, who both taught me to read the Fathers as pastors of the Church and shepherded me through this project with encouragement, understanding, and skill. Essential support for my work came from Concordia University in granting me release from administrative duties and even a study leave to focus on my academic work. The university’s vision for developing its faculty is exceptional. I also found myself in the enviable position of having at my disposal the libraries at Concordia Seminary, Concordia University, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, which have excellent collections and even more excellent research librarians. Finally, the editorial eye of my wife, Elisa Schulz, has spared my readers and helped clarify my argument.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACO	<i>Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum</i>
ACT	Ancient Christian Texts
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
BBKL	Biographisch–Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum: Series graeca
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series latina
CETEDOC	CETEDOC Library of Christian Latin Texts–Series A (LLT-A)
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
IP	<i>Instrumenta Patristica</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, eds.
LXX	Septuagint
NPNF <sup>1</sup>	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1
NPNF <sup>2</sup>	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2
PG	Patrologia graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]
PL	Patrologia latina [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina]
Pseudo-	Also, Ps.-, Pseudonymous.
(Pseudo-)	Also, (Ps.-), Possibly Pseudonymous.
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen

PTS	Patristische Texten und Studien
RB	Revue Bénédictine
SC	Sources chrétiennes
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TLG	<i>Thesaurus linguae graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works</i>
WSA	The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century

Abbreviations for primary texts follow the lists and guidelines of *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), 124–71.

## CHRONOLOGY

This chronology also functions to assist the reader in locating primary texts cited in the footnotes throughout the paper. Due to the closure of libraries on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, some texts are identified by their location in the TLG/CETEDOC databases, according to their TLG reference or clavis number, respectively.

Author	Date of the text	Relevant citation	Publication of relevant citation (original and translation)
Marcion	140–160 205–213	Tertullian: <i>Adversus Marcion</i> 1.7, 17	PL 2:253–54 ANF 3:275–76
Naassene report	mid to late 2 <sup>nd</sup> c. 222	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i> 5.27.39, 1	Litwa, <i>Refutation</i> , 228 Litwa, <i>Refutation</i> , 227, 229
Justin Martyr	ca 160	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> 124	TLG 0645.003 Goodspeed, <i>Apologeten</i> ; Falls, <i>St. Justin Martyr</i> , 341
Irenaeus	174–89	<i>Against Heresies</i> 3.6, 1 <i>Against Heresies</i> 3.19, 1 <i>Against Heresies</i> 4.38, 4	CETEDOC 1154 f(A); SC 221 ANF 2:419 CETEDOC 1154 f(A); SC 221 ANF 2:448 CETEDOC 1154 f(A); SC 100 ANF 2:522
Clement of Alexandria	195–197  195–197  198–203	<i>Protrepticus</i> 12.123, 1  <i>Paedagogus</i> 1.26, 2  <i>Stromateis</i> 2.125, 5  <i>Stromateis</i> 4.23.149.8  <i>Stromateis</i> 6.146, 2  <i>Stromateis</i> 7.56, 6	TLG 0555.001; SC 2 GCS 12:86 ANF 2:206 GCS 12:105 ANF 2:215; FC 23:26 GCS 15:181 FC 85:239 GCS 15:314; SC 463 ANF 2:437 GCS 15:507 ANF 2:514 GCS 17:41 ANF 2:539
Tertullian	ca. 205–213  ca. 215	<i>Adversus Hermogenem</i> 5.4  <i>Adversus Praxeas</i> 13.26  <i>Adversus Praxeas</i> 22.74	CSEL 47:132, 7 SC 439:5.4 ACW 24:13 PL 2:169 ANF 3:608 PL 2:182–83 ANF 3:618
Hippolytus (dub.)	ca. 200–235?	<i>In Valentinianos</i> (= <i>De resurrectione et incorruptibilitate</i> ?)	Pitra, <i>Analecta Sacra</i> 4:68, 335 C. Schulz (from Latin)
Origen	pre 222	<i>Comm. in cant. canticorum</i> Prologue 2.34	SC 375:114 GCS 33:180 ACW 26:34–35

	<i>Comm. in canticum canticorum</i> 3.180, 18	SC 376:526 ACW 26:180
232–250	<i>In Exodum homiliae</i> 6.5	GCS 29:196–97 FC 71:290–91
	<i>In Exodum homiliae</i> 8.2.220, 16	GCS 29:220 FC 71:318–20
232–250	<i>In Leviticum homiliae</i> 9.11, 4	GCS 29:439 FC 83:199–200
	<i>In Leviticum homiliae</i> 11.2, 11	GCS 29:450 FC 83:212–13
232–250	<i>Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel</i> 1.9.1	GCS 33:333 ACW 61:38
	<i>Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel</i> 13.1.5	GCS 33:441 ACW 61:155–56
232–250	<i>Homily 1 on Psalm</i> 16:5–6 (LXX 15:5–6)	TLG 2042.119 GCS New Series, 19:81 C. Schulz
	2 <sup>nd</sup> <i>Homily on Psalm</i> 38 (LXX 37)	CETEDOC 0198 F(A); SC 411 Heintz, <i>Pedagogy</i> , 253–54
	<i>Homily on Psalm</i> 82 (LXX 81)	GCS New Series, 19:509–23 C. Schulz
232–250	<i>Commentarii in Ev. Joannis</i> 20.27.242	TLG 2042.005; SC 290 FC 89:256–57
	<i>Commentarii in Ev. Joannis</i> 32.5.59 and 32.18.234, 3	TLG 2042.005; SC 385 FC 89:353 and 385
234–235	<i>On Prayer</i> 19.3	GCS2:342–43 Oulton, <i>Library of Christian Classics</i> , 277
235–244	<i>In Epistulam Pauli ad Romanos</i> 3. = <i>Commentarii in Romanos</i> 128, 13	Vetus Latina 16, Hammond Bammel, 198–99 FC 103.183–84
	<i>In Epistulam Pauli ad Rom.</i> 34.7.1.554, 29	Vetus Latina 34, Hammond Bammel: 554 FC 104:61–63
245–249	<i>Contra Celsum</i> 4.29	TLG 2042.001; SC 36 ANF 4:509
	<i>Contra Celsum</i> 4.31	TLG 2042.001; SC 36 ANF 4:510–11
	<i>Contra Celsum</i> 8.3	GCS 2:522–23 ANF 4:640–41
	<i>Contra Celsum</i> 8.74	GCS 2:291 ANF 4:668
238–245	<i>Selecta in Ezechielem</i>	PG 13:769, 28 C. Schulz
240	<i>In Jeremiam Homilia</i> 15.6, 23	TLG 2042.009; SC 238 FC 97:163–64
244–249	<i>Commentarium in Ev. Matthaei</i> 16.29, 74	GCS 40:574 Heine, Oxford Early Christian Texts 2:503
	<i>Commentarium in Ev. Matthaei</i> 17.19, 22	GCS 40:638 Heine, Oxford Early Christian Texts 2:521
	<i>Commentarium in Ev. Matthaei</i> 17.32, 34	GCS 40:679 Heine, Oxford Early Christian Texts 2:522
	<i>Commentarii in Matthaem</i> 24	GCS 38:40

			Heine, Oxford Early Christian Texts 2:573
		<i>Hom. 7 on Ps. 68 (LXX 67) ch. 5, 43 and 46</i>	TLG 2042.119 GCS New Series, 19 C. Schulz
		<i>Hom. 15 on Psalm 77 (LXX 76) ch. 5, 27 and 38</i>	TLG 2042.119; GCS New Series, 19 C. Schulz
Origen (dub.)		<i>Fragmenta in Pss. 1–150 on Ps. 82:6 and 7 (LXX 81:6–7)</i>	TLG 2042.044 Pitra, <i>Analecta Sacra</i>
Origen (dub.)		<i>Selecta in Psalmos on Ps. 4:2 (LXX 4:2)</i>	PG 12:1137, 1140 C. Schulz
Origen (dub.)		<i>Selecta in Psalmos on Ps. 5:5–6 (LXX 5:6–7)</i>	PG 12:1169 C. Schulz
Origen (dub.)		<i>Selecta in Psalmos on Ps. 136:2 (LXX 135:2)</i>	PG 12:1656, 5 C. Schulz
Origen (dub.)		<i>Scholia in Lucam on Luke 14:18–20</i>	PG 17:364, 42 C. Schulz
Cyprian	248–249	<i>Adv. Iudaios / Ad Quirinum 2.6, 54</i>	PL 4:702 ANF 5:517–18
Novatian	post 251	<i>De Trinitate 15, 10–12</i> <i>De Trinitate 20, 2 and 5</i>	PL 3:913 ANF 5:625 PL 3:926 ANF 5:631–32
Ps.-Clementine	300–320	<i>Homily 16.6–19</i>	GCS 42, Rehm, 1:220–28 ANF 8:555–63
Ps.-Marius Victorinus	300's?	<i>De physicis 15</i>	PL 8:1303–4 C. Schulz
Pamphilus of Ceasarea	307–310	<i>Apologia pro Origene</i>	Fontes Christiana 80:316 FC 120:83
Ps.-Clementine	ca. 325	<i>Recognitiones 2.42</i>	CETEDOC 0198 N(A); GCS 51 ANF 8:108–9
Eusebius of Caesarea	ca. 335	<i>Commentaria in Psalmos on Ps. 4:3</i> <i>Commentaria in Psalmos on Psalm 56:11 (LXX 55:12)</i> <i>Commentaria in Psalmos on Psalm 82 (LXX 81)</i> <i>Commentaria in Psalmos on Ps. 84:7–8 (LXX Ps. 83:8–9)</i> <i>Commentaria in Psalmos on Ps. 86:8 (LXX 85:8)</i> <i>Commentaria in Psalmos on Ps. 89:6 (LXX 88:7)</i>	PG 23:105, 26 PG 23:497, 56 C. Schulz PG 23:984, 5, 10, 16, 45 C. Schulz PG 23:1013, 4 C. Schulz PG 23:1033, 28 C. Schulz PG 23:1084, 26 C. Schulz
	337	<i>De ecclesiastica theologia 1.10.5, 4</i> <i>De ecclesiastica theologia 1.20.20, 1</i>	GCS 14:69 FC 135:172–73 GCS 14:84 FC 135:197–98
Cyril of Jerusalem	ca. 348–350	<i>Procatechesis 6, 12</i>	PG 33:345; Reischl and Rupp, <i>Opera NPNF</i> <sup>2</sup> 7:73
	ca. 348–350	<i>Catecheses ad illuminados 11.4, 12</i>	PG 33:696; Reischl and Rupp, <i>Opera</i> C. Schulz
Athanasius (dub.)	330–335	<i>Expositio in Psalmum on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1)</i> <i>Expositio in Psalmum on Ps. 82 (LXX 81)</i>	PG 27:229 C. Schulz PG 27:365

Athanasius	332–335	<i>De Incarnatione Verbi</i> 4.6.8	C. Schulz TLG 2035.002; SC 199
	356–362	<i>Oration 1 Against the Arians</i> 9.2.3	Behr, <i>Popular Patristics</i> 44B:53–54 Metzler, <i>Athanasius Werke</i> 1.1.2
	359–360	<i>Letter 2 to Serapion</i> 2.4.3–4.	Rusch, <i>Trinitarian Controversy</i> , 70 Savvidis and Wyra, <i>Athanasius Werke</i> 1.1.4
Ps.-Athanasius	350–360	<i>Oratio IV Contra Arianos</i>	DelCogliano, <i>Popular Patristics</i> , 43 Stegmann, <i>Die pseudo-athanasianische “IVte Rede gegen die Arianer”</i> (1917):43–87. PG 28:16.26, 17.4 NPNF <sup>2</sup> 4:439
	?	<i>Liber de definitionibus</i>	PG 28:536, 35 TLG 2035.075; CCSG 8
	?	<i>Quaestiones aliae</i>	C. Schulz PG 28:773, 45
	4 <sup>th</sup> c? 7–8 <sup>th</sup> ?	<i>Sermo in annuntiationem Deiparae</i>	C. Schulz PG 28:933, 16
	4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> or 9 <sup>th</sup> c.?	<i>Homilia in occursum domini</i>	C. Schulz PG 28:977, 15
	4 <sup>th</sup> c. core	<i>Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos</i>	C. Schulz PG 28:1292, 55
	4 <sup>th</sup> c. core	<i>Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos</i>	C. Schulz PG 28:1297, 47
Zeno of Verona	ca. 350	<i>Tractatus</i> 1.37	C. Schulz CCSL 22:95
Phoebadius of Agen	ca. 358	<i>Liber contra Arianos</i> 3, 19	C. Schulz PL 20:35 CETEDOC 0473; CCSL 64
Hilary of Poitiers	356–60	<i>De Trinitate</i> CCSL 62.6.18, 3	Wessel, <i>Phoebadius</i> , 13–14 CETEDOC 0433; CCSL 62
		<i>De Trinitate</i> 62.7.10, 14	FC 25:186 CETEDOC 0433; CCSL 62
		<i>De Trinitate</i> 62.7.24, 9	FC 25:233–34 CETEDOC 0433; CCSL 62
	ca. 365	<i>Tractatus super psalmos</i> on Ps. 135 (LXX Ps. 134)	FC 25:251–52 CCSL 61B:148, 5
		<i>Tractatus super psalmos</i> Ps. 136 (LXX Ps. 135)	C. Schulz CCSL 61B:165, 4
Gregory of Elvira	d. after 392	<i>Tractatus Origenis</i> , tract. 1, 273	C. Schulz CETEDOC 0546; CCSL 69
		tract. 6, 31	C. Schulz CETEDOC 0546; CCSL 69
		<i>Frag. tractatus</i> in <i>Genesim</i> 3, 22 ln 16	C. Schulz CETEDOC 0546; CCSL 69
	360–361	<i>De fide orthodoxa contra Arianos</i> , 158	C. Schulz PL 20:35 CETEDOC 0551; CCSL 69
Basil	362–370	<i>Homilia in Psalmum</i> on Ps. 116 (LXX 115)	C. Schulz PG 30:108, 48–109, 8
	364–365	<i>Adversus Eunomium</i> 2.4	C. Schulz SC 305:22
	364–365	<i>Adversus Eunomium</i> 3.5	FC 122:136 SC 305:164 FC 122

(Ps.-)Basil	late 4 <sup>th</sup> c.?	<i>Adversus Eunomium</i> 5 = <i>De Spiritu</i> Ep. 8.3	TLG 2040.019; PG 29:769 Henry, <i>Études plotiniennes I</i> , 185–96 C. Schulz PG 30:776 C. Schulz
Optatus of Milevis	364–378	<i>C. Parmenianum Donatistam</i> 4.2.2, ln 9	SC 413:82 Edwards, Translated Texts 27:84–85
Ambrosiaster	366–375	<i>Commentarii in XII epistolas beati Pauli</i> on 1 Cor. 3:4  <i>Commentarii in XII epistolas beati Pauli</i> on 2 Cor 8:9	PL 17:208 Bray, ACT, <i>Romans and 1–2 Corinthians</i> , 132 PL 17:326 Bray, ACT, <i>Romans and 1–2 Corinthians</i> , 238–39
Diodore of Tarsus	370–390	<i>Commentarii in Psalmos</i>	TLG 4134.004; CCSG 6 Hill, Writings from the Greco- Roman World 9:160
Gregory of Nazianzus	369	<i>Or.</i> 7.23	SC 405, 238–40 Thomas, <i>The Image of God</i> , 126
	381	<i>Or.</i> 40.10	SC 358:218 <i>NPNF</i> <sup>2</sup> 7:360–77
Epiphanius of Salamis	374	<i>Ancoratus</i> 71.3, 4	GCS 25:88 FC 128:161–63
	374–377	<i>Panarion</i> 3.74.8.3	GCS 37:324, 20 Williams, <i>Panarion</i> 3:494–96
Ambrose	377–380	<i>De fide</i> 2.13, 37  <i>De fide</i> 5.1, 48	Fontes Christiani, 47:334 C. Schulz Fontes Christiani, 47:602–3 C. Schulz
	387	<i>De paradiso</i> 13.61.322, 7	PL 14:291–332 FC 42:342–43
Didymus the Blind	post 378 January	<i>De Trinitate</i> 2.5.4, 4	Seiler, Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 52:76 C. Schulz
		<i>De Trinitate</i> 3.821, 38	PG 39:821 C. Schulz
		<i>De Trinitate</i> 3.39.865, 30	PG 39:865 C. Schulz
		<i>De Trinitate</i> 3.39.937, 25	PG 39:937 C. Schulz
	350–398	<i>Commentarii in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 31:19 (LXX 30:20)	Gronewald, <i>Psalmenkommentar</i> , pt. 3.151, 2 C. Schulz
	350–398	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 63, 15	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 1:155 C. Schulz
		<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 633, 9	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:39 C. Schulz
		<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 801, 2	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:124 C. Schulz
		<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 836, 5	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:143–44

		<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 838, 5	C. Schulz Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:144
		<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 860, 4	C. Schulz TLG 2102.021; Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2
		<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 896, 9	C. Schulz Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> , 2:178–79
		<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag 1195, 8	C. Schulz Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> , 2:318
350–398		<i>In Genesim</i> 3:22 109, 10	C. Schulz SC 233:256–59 FC 132:106–7
		<i>In Genesim</i> 6:5	TLG 2102.041; SC 244 FC 132:148–49
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350–398		<i>Commentarii in Ecclesiasten</i> 41.1	Binder and Liesenborghs, PTA 25.194
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Tyconius	ca. 380	<i>Expositio Apocalypseos</i> 3.24, 12; also <i>Fragmenta Taurinensia Tyconii expositionis</i> <i>Apocalypseos</i> §198, p. 366, 217	SSCL 107A:157 Robinson, diss. (University of St. Michael's College), 176
Gregory of Nyssa	380	<i>In Ecclesiasten</i> (Hom. 8)	Alexander, <i>Opera</i> , 5.380, 7
		<i>Oratio catechetica magna</i> 40, 65	Hall, <i>Homilies on Ecclesiastes</i> , 104 SC 453:336 Srawley, <i>Catechical Oration</i> , 118
Faustinus (Faustus) Luciferianus	ca. 380	<i>De Trinitate</i> 49, 3	PL 13.81; CETEDOC 0120 CCSL 69 <i>Faustinus</i> , London (1721):75–76
<i>Apostolic</i> <i>Constitutions</i>	ca. 380	ACO 2.26, 33	TLG 2894.001; SC 320 ANF 7:410
		ACO 2.31, 12	TLG 2894.001; SC 320 ANF 7:411–12
Theodore of Mopsuestia	ca. 380	<i>Comm. in xii prophetas minores</i> , Mal 2 sec 10, 4	Sprenger, <i>Biblica et Patristica</i> (1977) FC 108:408
	ca. 400	<i>Fragmenta in epistulam ad Romanos</i>	Staab 138, 34 C. Schulz
Evagrius	382	<i>Epistula fidei</i> (ps.-Basil Ep. 8), §3	text and trans. by L. Dysinger, <a href="http://www.ldysinger.com/">http://www.ldysinger.com/</a> See also LCL 190:47 FC 13:24

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Filastrius of Brescia	383–91	<i>Diversarum hereseon</i> , liber 147, 16	CETEDOC 0121; CCSL 9 C. Schulz
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	388 or possibly 390–398	<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i> , Series 1, Hom. 67 <i>Expositiones in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 4:2 (LXX Ps. 4:3) <i>Expositiones in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 12:8 (LXX Ps. 11:9) <i>Expositiones in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 50:1 (LXX Ps. 49:1)	PG 53:187, 54 FC 87:71–73 PG 55:46, 60 Hill, <i>Commentary on the Psalms</i> , 1:53–54 PG 55:148, 31 Hill, <i>Commentary on the Psalms</i> , 1:221–22 PG 55:241, 1 and 22 Hill, <i>Commentary on the Psalms</i> , 1:349–50
	391	<i>Homiliae in Joannem</i> , Hom. 3 <i>Homiliae in Joannem</i> , Hom. 14 <i>Homiliae in Joannem</i> , Hom. 61	PG 59:39, 23 FC 33:30–31 PG 59:93, 24 FC 33:133 PG 59:339, 14 FC 41:157–58
	392	<i>Homiliae in epistulam ad Romanos</i>	PG 60:525, 50 <i>NPNF</i> <sup>1</sup> 11:440–41
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Chrysostom (dub.)	400	<i>Hom. de capto Eutropio</i>	PG 52:403, 17 <i>NPNF</i> <sup>1</sup> 9:257
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	4 <sup>th</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>In exaltationem verandae crucis</i>	PG 59:680, 3 C. Schulz
	4 <sup>th</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>De non iudicando proximo</i>	PG 60:764, 58 C. Schulz
	4 <sup>th</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup> c. 4 <sup>th</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>In illud: Memor fui Dei</i> <i>In publicanum et pharisaeum</i>	PG 61:692, 26 PG 62:725, 72 C. Schulz
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	ca. 400	<i>Homily 30</i>	Kinzig 2:495 C. Schulz
Severian of Gabala	ca. 400	<i>In Mundi Creationem</i> , Hom. 4	PG 56:465, 55 Hill, <i>ACT</i> , 56
Paulinus of Nola	ca. 400	<i>Epistula</i> 23.198, 27	CSEL 29.199 C. Schulz
Jerome	384	<i>Epistula</i> 22	PL 54:149, 2 CCSL 54:149 <i>NPNF</i> <sup>2</sup> 6:23
	386–388	<i>Comm. in Epistulam ad Galatas</i> 1.1	CCSL 77A:25 FC 121:78
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	392–393	<i>Comm. in prophetas minores</i> , Osee 1.1, 2	CETEDOC 0589; CCSL 76 Scheck, ACT, <i>Comm. on the 12 Prophets</i> , 2:151
	392–393	<i>Comm. in prophetas minores</i> , Michaeum 1.2, 518	CETEDOC 0589; CCSL 76 Scheck, ACT, <i>Comm. on the 12 Prophets</i> , 1:62
	392–393	<i>Comm. in prophetas minores</i> , Sophoniam 1.155	CETEDOC 0589; CCSL 76A Scheck, ACT, <i>Comm. on the 12 Prophets</i> , 1:118
	398	<i>Comm. in Ev. Matthaei</i> 1, 791  3, 37	CCSL 77:38 FC 117 CCSL 77:140 FC 117:190
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	409–410	<i>Comm. in Isaiam</i> 15.18 on Is 56:1	CCSL 73A:631 ACW 68:707
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	393–394	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 95:3 (LXX 94.3), §6	CETEDOC 0283; CCSL 39 WSA 18:414–15
	394	<i>Contra Adimantum</i> 1.5.2	CETEDOC 0319; CSEL 25 WSA 1/19:182
	396–399	<i>Enarrationes</i> , Psalm 96 (LXX 97), §14, 18	CETEDOC 0283; CCSL 39 WSA 3/18
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	399–400	<i>Adnotationes in Iob</i> 1.38	CETEDOC 0271; CSEL 28/2 C. Schulz
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	401, 416 or 412	<i>Enarrationes</i> , Psalm 86 (LXX 85), §12, 15	CETEDOC 0283; CCSL 39 WSA 3/18
	403–404 winter	<i>Sermo 360B</i>	Dolbeau 25.251, 113–16 WSA 3/11:368
	406; 408–420,	<i>In Evangelium Johannis tractatus</i> , 1.4, 18  Tract. 48.9–10  Tract. 54.2	CETEDOC 0278; CCSL 36 FC 78:43–44 CETEDOC 0278; CCSL 36 FC 88:234 CETEDOC 0278; CCSL 36

		Tract. 65.1, 29	FC 88:302–3 CETEDOC 0278; CCSL 36 FC 90:51
410		<i>Sermo 166</i>	CCSL 41B 314, 26 WSA 3/5:208
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410 or 411		<i>Sermo 107</i> , §3	PL 38:628, 34 WSA 3/4:111
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411–412		<i>Enarrationes</i> , Psalm 135 (LXX 134), §9, 30	CETEDOC 0283; CCSL 39:36 WSA 3/20
412 Lent		<i>Enarrationes</i> , Psalm 50 (LXX 49), §2, 5	CETEDOC 0283; CCSL 39 WSA 3/16
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		<i>De civitate Dei</i> 15.23, 95	CETEDOC 0313; CCSL 48 FC 14:473–74
414–415		<i>Enarrationes</i> , Psalm 84 (LXX 83), §11, 40	CETEDOC 0283; CCSL 39 WSA 8/18
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414–416		<i>Enarrationes</i> , Psalm 136 (LXX 135), §2, 8 and 10	CETEDOC 0283; CCSL 39:63 WSA 3/20
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416–417, Lent		<i>Sermo 125</i>	PL 38:691, 10 WSA 3/4:254
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Ps.-Augustine	5 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Solutiones diversarum quaestionum</i> , 1, 56	CETEDOC 0363; CCSL 90 C. Schulz
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	415–345	<i>De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium</i> 3.2.262, 22	CETEDOC 0514; CSEL 17.262–63 Fairbairn, <i>Grace and Christology in the Early Church</i> , 178–79

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Maximinus (dub.) <i>Collectio Veronensis</i>	ca. 427	<i>Contra Iudaeos</i> fol. ms 13.8v, 9	CCSL 87:113 C. Schulz
Theodoret (dub.) pre-429 (also “Pseudo- Justin”) Acts of the Council of Ephesus	431	<i>Quaest. et respons. ad orthodoxos</i> 146, 1  <i>Explanation of the Twelve Chapters</i>  <i>Against Nestorius</i>	TLG 4089.016 Papadopoulos-Kerameus (1895) C. Schulz ACO 1.1.5.21 Russell, <i>Cyril of Alexandria</i> , 183 ACO 1.1.5.30, 15 C. Schulz ACO 1.1.6.39, 38 Russell, <i>Cyril of Alexandria</i> , 145 ACO 1.1.6.65, 19 C. Schulz ACO 1.1.6.92, 20 C. Schulz
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Ps.-Basil of Seleucia Isidore of Pelusium	431–459  vivit 365–435	<i>Sermones xli</i> , serm. 23  <i>Epistulae</i> 3.31, 22  <i>Epistulae</i> 3.237, 23	PG 85:273, 41 C. Schulz PG 78:752 C. Schulz PG 78:917 C. Schulz
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	451–466	<i>Epistulae: Collectio Sirmondiana</i> Ep. 147, 211 and 233	TLG 4089.022; SC 111 <i>NPNF</i> <sup>2</sup> 3:319
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Theodore	5 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Catena in epistulam ad Romanos</i> 137, 25	TLG 4102.010 Cramer, <i>Catena Graecorum partum in N.T.</i> , vol. 4 (1844)
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Barsanuphius and John Theognius	early 6 <sup>th</sup> c.  vivid 425–522	<i>Quaestiones et responsiones</i> , Ep. 119, 21  <i>Homilia in Ramos palamarum</i> sec. 7, 7	TLG 2851.001; SC 427 FC 113:138 TLG 2857.001 Noret, <i>Analecta Bollandiana</i> 89 C. Schulz
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Anonymous	ca. 550	<i>Contra philosophos</i> , disp. 4, 1262 and 1275	CCSL 58A:237–38 C. Schulz
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Isidore of Seville early 7 <sup>th</sup> c.		<i>Etymologiarum siue Originum libri XX</i> 7.4.10	CETEDOC 1186 Lindsay, <i>Etymologiarum Barney, Etymologies</i> C. Schulz
	ca. 633	<i>Sententiae</i> 3.39.4–6	CCSL 3:282 C. Schulz
Scotus Anonymus	7 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Comm. Ep. Catholicas, Ep. Iacobi</i> , 544	CETEDOC 1123a; CCSL 108B C. Schulz
Ps.-Hilary of Arles	7 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Tract. septem Epistulas Catholicas, Ep. 2 Petri</i> , 34	CETEDOC 0508; CCSL 108B C. Schulz
Anonymous	7 <sup>th</sup> c.	<i>Glossa Psalmorum ex traditione seniorum</i> Ps. 47:9 (LXX 46:10)	CETEDOC 1167c, 1.199, 5 C. Schulz
		Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1)	CETEDOC 1167c, 1.207, 3 C. Schulz
		Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6)	CETEDOC 1167c, 1.372, 1 C. Schulz
		Ps. 83:1 (LXX 82:2)	CETEDOC 1167c, 1.373, 3 C. Schulz
		Ps. 95:3 (LXX 94:3)	CETEDOC 1167c, 1.434, 7

		Ps. 136:2 (LXX 135:2)	C. Schulz CETEDOC 1167c, 2.174, 3–4
Maximus The Confessor	628–630	<i>Ambigua ad Joannem</i> 20.2, 12	C. Schulz PG 91:1237–41 Constas, <i>Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library</i> 28:409, 411, 419
	before 633/4	<i>Liber asceticus</i> 37, 45	PG 90:944 TLG 2892.112; CCSG 40
Ps.-Marcellus	medieval		Sherwood, <i>ACW</i> 21, 127 PL 7:1098 C. Schulz

## ABSTRACT

Schulz, Charles R. “I Said, You Are Gods: Pastoral Motivations for Patristic Citations of Psalm 82:6 (LXX 81:6).” PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2020. 386 pp.

The early church fathers frequently cited Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High,” a passage Jesus himself quoted (John 10:34) to defend his own title as the Son of God. Scholars agree that the patristic use of verse underwrote the developing doctrine of deification, which promised that Christians would become “gods” in some sense by bearing God’s image and likeness and participating in Christ and his saving work. In order to deepen and focus our understanding of the significance and role of this passage for patristic theology—and particularly for pastoral practice—this study identified every use of the verse in extant texts from the first six centuries of Christian history (from the middle of the second century through Maximus the Confessor). The categories of pastoral employment of the passage include the defense of monotheism, instruction in Christology, exhortations to virtue, praise for salvation, delineations of authority roles in church and state, and eschatological depictions of glorification to come, with shifting emphasis amid the shifting contexts over the course of the centuries. While Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) happened to lay the foundation for the doctrine of deification, the immediate reasons for its citation arose out of the near historical context with its accompanying pastoral needs and concerns. The survey of the usage of this text also illustrates the patristic practice of intertextual exegesis and precise reading of the Bible (ἀκριβεία), as well as constructive engagement with classical philosophical concepts. The church fathers emerge as pastoral practitioners, motivated by the care of souls, who boldly deployed this perplexing text for the practical goals of proclaiming Christ and calling human beings to experience the fullness of his salvation—as gods. Their examples hold the promise of inspiring pastors today toward fresh contemporary and creative engagement with the text. The appendix offers the reader 123 newly translated patristic passages with citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6).

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: WHY STUDY THE PATRISTIC CITATIONS OF PSALM 82:6?<sup>1</sup>

One of the few broad, universal rules of Christian hermeneutics is that “Scripture interprets Scripture.” Clearly it is a part of the legacy which Christianity inherited from Judaism. A subpoint of this principle is that more difficult passages should be interpreted in the light of clearer passages, which itself implies that some passages are straightforward in their interpretation and others more challenging.<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 82:6 (LXX 81:6) would certainly belong to the latter category. “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” naturally raises questions. Presuming that God is speaking (as all historic readers have done), who are the “gods”?<sup>3</sup> How can the existence of other gods possibly be granted within a context which affirms monotheism? If they are “gods,” then how do they become gods and what does it mean that they are gods? How does the status of the “gods” relate

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of biblical texts are my own unless otherwise noted. Throughout the project, references to the Psalms employ both the English and the patristic numbering of the LXX. Appendix Two offers the reader a table translating the psalm passages relevant to this dissertation from one numbering system to another. Psalms 1–9 and 148–150 are the same in both systems. Since modern Psalms 9 and 10 are the patristic Psalm 9, the patristic numbers 10–112 correspond to the modern 11–113. The modern Psalms 114 and 115 are joined to become the patristic Psalm 113. The modern Psalm 116, however, is divided between the patristic Psalms 114 and 115, so that the patristic numbers 116–145 correspond to the modern numbers 117–146. Since the modern Psalm 147 is again divided between the patristic Psalms 146 and 147, the numbering lines up again at the end, yielding 150 in each system. Often verse numbers in the Psalms are off by one or two as well, because of the patristic predilection of numbering the inscriptions. As Appendix Two notes, occasionally key words found in the LXX are missing in the English Bible.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Augustine, *Doctr. chr.* 1.37 and 3.26.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this work, “God” is used to designate the one true Creator God; “god” indicates the human creature maximized by God’s grace and sanctifying work to achieve God’s ultimate desire for his creature. English affords the opportunity to differentiate between the two through the convention of capitalization. The reader may keep in mind that neither the Greek nor the Latin texts explored in this study had any such orthographic convention to distinguish between the various senses of G/god. It would be perfectly defensible to render ancient texts such that they read, for example, “God makes Christians to be Gods.” This would invite the reader into the ambiguities and challenges presented by the texts themselves. On the other hand, the modern reader, with a strong and absolute sense of differentiation between the divine and the human, would thus import into such a rendering a sense of polytheism which would be foreign to the Fathers’ intent. In short, because modern languages have narrowed the meaning of God (“God”), this work will write god or “god” when creatures are meant.

to the status of “sons” (presuming the same group is meant)?

The problem of the verse is hardly alleviated by its location within the psalm as a whole. In the Septuagint, which the earliest Fathers would have read, the psalm begins, “God stood in the assembly of gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods.” Again, some set of divine beings is presumed without preserving a unique status for God apart from what might be implied by his standing in the center and distinguishing (or judging) the others. God then indicts the “gods” for their bias (v. 2) and their failure to execute justice for the vulnerable (vv. 3–4). The passage implies some sort of ruling authority exercised by these “gods” and for which God calls them to account. Then, it appears that the psalmist’s voice breaks in, grounding the injustice of the “gods” in their lack of understanding. The consequence is that “all the foundations of the earth will shake” (v. 5).

When the divine voice speaks again, it includes not only the admission of the divine status of the addressees, but also their punishment for their injustice: “I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers” (vv. 6–7). That these “gods” can die certainly qualifies their divinity. How do they die? And what is the reference to “one of the rulers” who falls?

Finally, the psalmist concludes the passage with an appeal to God to “arise” to judge the earth himself, presumably because he alone will execute the requisite justice. But he finishes by offering an enigmatic reason for this judgment: “because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations” (v. 7).

There is little here which explains the reference to the “gods” and some elements which easily add to the confusion. It is perhaps not surprising that in my decades of active involvement in the church, I cannot recall a pastor ever citing Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in a sermon or a Bible

study. One might presume that the text seemed to offer more trouble than it might be worth. This was not always the case. Psalm 82 (LXX 81), particularly verse 6, enjoyed frequent reference among the early church fathers. Perhaps exactly because the passage raised questions which needed answers or because the passage had suffered misinterpretation or even because the Lord Jesus had himself cited it in his dialogue with the Jewish leaders (John 10:34–35), the verse became a regular part of the larger discourse of the church fathers. Rather than shying away from difficult passages, early exegetes like Origen believed that challenging passages invited the reader to explore deeper spiritual meanings.<sup>4</sup> For them, this was not a “problem child” or a “black sheep” among the verses of Scripture, something which must be tolerated and explained, however discomfiting that may be. Rather, they discovered that Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) brought its own light to the revelation of God in Christ and could even function as a “clearer” passage to illumine other parts of the Scripture. It became a beloved text with multiple uses and vital insights into the nature of God, the person and work of Christ, the call to a Christian life, and the hope of glory to come.

### **Thesis**

This dissertation endeavors to explore all the patristic citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and read them within the context of pastoral care. While the church fathers clearly worked in a context different from ours with different philosophical and worldview frameworks, the breadth and depth of their employment of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) challenges the contemporary neglect of the passage, particularly in pastoral care. The continuous concerns of the church of all ages to be

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<sup>4</sup> A century earlier, Justin Martyr was already following the same procedure. Robert M. Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 76–77.

engaged in mission and apologetics, teaching and catechesis, moral instruction and paraenesis, as well as worship and doxology highlight our need to inquire as to their practice and how it might inspire and inform the church today.<sup>5</sup> While all of their solutions will not merit implementation in our own contexts, some will and others may simply stimulate new possibilities to answer our own new situations.

The verse, after all, points to deep issues of theology proper and theological anthropology. While few people today understand themselves to be gods or in the process of becoming gods, western civilization continues to ask what it means to be a human being. Our understanding of and presumptions about the human condition inform our politics, our social policy, and our morality. It also pertains centrally to our conception of how we relate to God and how God relates to us. That relationship presupposes similarity and difference—enough similarity to grant some kind of connection but enough difference so that the “relationship” does not dissolve into a singularity. In explaining how human beings can (and cannot) be called gods, the church fathers model a proclamation of the Gospel of salvation in Christ which promises that God’s human creatures find in their Savior their own ultimate transformation and their deepest connection to the divine. Learning from them carries the potential not only of expanding and deepening our exegesis of the Scriptures; it promises to enrich our own understanding of human identity and calling.

As we shall see, the path the Fathers take in interpreting this passage is bounded by an

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<sup>5</sup> Childers advocates for strengthening ministry today with insights gained from study of the Fathers as pastoral practitioners: “Their reading of Scripture is ‘from faith unto faith,’ for the sake of community. It not only begins in the matrix of personal spirituality but has the aim of shaping piety and of addressing pastoral issues in communal settings. For the Fathers generally, there is no methodological gain from segregating their reading of the biblical text from the pressing concerns of worship, church conflict, the spiritual growth of new converts, and the life of prayer.” Jeff Childers, “Reading the Bible with Old Friends: The Value of Patristic Bible Interpretations for Ministry,” *Restoration Quarterly* 45, no. 1–2 (2003): 74.

observation of Creator-creature distinction, which in turn is often articulated in the ontological contrast between the participated and the participating as conceived by Platonism.<sup>6</sup> Thus, even when the Fathers at times depict the effect of salvation in terms of human beings transcending the sinfulness embedded in their humanity, this ascent is limited to participation in discrete divine characteristics, while others remain unique to God himself.

Patristic interpretations also advance according to the methods of intertextual exegesis and precise readings of the text. The first grounds the reading of a passage within the larger scope of Scripture even as it safeguards a reading within the *regula fidei* of the Church, because those intertextual pairings develop into traditional networks which support specific conclusions about the text. The precision in reading the Scriptures (*akribeia*, ἀκρίβεια) propels the exegetical task forward in that the attention to the details of Scripture generate both the questions which arise from the text and the range of solutions which may address those questions. Those solutions would identify the gods of Scripture as individuals or groups within the biblical narrative, as categories of people like judges or priests, or as God's people, whether in the past (Israel), the present (the baptized), or the future (the glorified). At times, angels too would be included. Again, all of these solutions would observe the Creator-creation divide in that no created being could ever attain to numerical identity or ontological equality with the one true God.

Finally, we will come to see how the patristic applications of the Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) shifted between apologetic, didactic, paraenetic, and doxological purposes. Early usage of the passage arises in polemical contexts in which Justin Martyr and Irenaeus perceive the need to

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<sup>6</sup> The very fact that "participation" becomes the key patristic concept for relating the creation to the Creator underlines Kaiser's observation that the "creationist tradition" in the early church did not entail a gulf between God and the world or a mechanization of nature in the modern sense. He describes the status of nature as a "relative autonomy" vis-à-vis God, because it is an autonomy based on God's creative word and power and exercised within the limits of divine law. Christopher Kaiser, *Creational Theology and the History of Physical Science: The Creationist Tradition from Basil to Bohr*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 78 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 59.

defend the promises and character of the Christian message of salvation and the unique nature of God. Origen expands the application to include a vibrant paraenesis which challenges Christians to live up to their calling in Christ. Christological implications become the focus of the early Latin west and of those engaged in the Arian debate. At the same time, as the church hierarchy becomes institutionalized within the state, Psalm 82 (LXX 81) comes to support the proper reverence due to those in the roles of bishops and judges. From the fourth century through the seventh, the pastoral applications of the text continue to reflect the changing ecclesial context. The increasing emphasis on asceticism, the mission to pagans, the catechization of the masses, and finally the growing role of the saints in popular piety will each inspire new applications of the passage.

At times, then, the text is taken to speak principally about God and at times about humanity, whether in its sinfulness, in its currently saved state, or in fulfillment of its holy calling. In all of this, the Fathers read Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) within the framework of the Scriptural narrative as a whole for the sake of their proclamation of Christ and for the edification of their hearers. Their example can inspire and challenge us to do the same for the church and her mission today.

### **The Status of the Question**

To date, no study has undertaken a comprehensive presentation of the patristic interpretation and use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). Scholars have pointed to the importance of the text, one of the “most frequently cited in early Christian literature” but only “cursory surveys” have been achieved.<sup>7</sup> In chronological order, the chief contributions and the patristic authors they

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<sup>7</sup> “Es sei an dieser Stelle darauf verwiesen, dass sich in der Literatur nur sehr wenige Beiträge (wenn vorhanden, dann i. d. R. englischsprachig[e]) der Frage nach der patristischen Rezeption von Ps. 82 annehmen.”

have engaged are as follows:

Ackerman, James S.	Justin, Augustine, Jerome
Jüngling, Hans-Winfried.	Eusebius, Augustine, Jerome
Vander Hoek, Gerald W.	Marcion, Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Novatian, Cyril of Jerusalem, <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> , John Chrysostom, Augustine
Nispel, Mark D.	Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius
Hoek, Annawies van den	Justin, Theophilus, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria
Mosser, Carl.	Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria
Jordan, Cooper.	Ignatius of Antioch, Justin, Irenaeus, Athanasius
Gers-Uphaus, Christian.	Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, Cyprian, Novatian, Eusebius, Augustine, Jerome, Theodoret <sup>8</sup>

Gerald W. Vander Hoek has engaged the greatest number of authors—twelve. In many ways, Vander Hoek’s work serves as a precedent for this effort, not only in the scope of his study, comparatively broader than others, but also in his desire to trace how the early church, like the Jews, applied the text to their own community.<sup>9</sup> Many studies focus on a few key figures, such as

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Christian Gers-Uphaus, *Sterbliche Götter—Göttliche Menschen: Psalm 82 und seine frühchristlichen Deutung* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2019), footnote 146, Kindle edition. Gers-Uphaus concludes his overview of the literature with a call for more studies dedicated to the patristic exegesis of this text.

<sup>8</sup> James S. Ackerman, “An Exegetical Study of Psalm 82” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1966); Hans-Winfried Jüngling, *Der Tod der Götter*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 38 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969); Gerald W. Vander Hoek, “The Function of Psalm 82 in the Fourth Gospel and History of the Johannine Community: A Comparative Midrash Study” (PhD diss., The Claremont Graduate University, 1988); Mark D. Nispel, “‘I Said, ‘You Are Gods’’: Salvation as Deification and the Early Patristic Use of Psalm 82” (Master’s thesis, University of Nebraska, 1997); Annawies van den Hoek, “I Said, You Are Gods . . . The Significance of Ps. 82 for Some Early Christian Authors,” in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 203–19; Carl Mosser, “The Earliest Patristic Interpretations of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents, and the Origin of Christian Deification,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 56, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 30–74; Jordan Cooper, *Christification: A Lutheran Approach to Theosis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014); Gers-Uphaus, *Sterbliche Götter—Göttliche Menschen*.

<sup>9</sup> Vander Hoek, like others listed here, selected only a few representative texts for each author. He also could not consider the sermons on Psalm 82 (LXX 81) by Origen and Augustine which have been discovered since his publication in 1988. In 1990, François Dolbeau discovered 26 sermons of Augustine in Mainz; in 2012, the Bavarian State Library announced the discovery of 29 sermons on the psalms by Origen. Each discovery included one sermon

Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, Augustine, and Jerome. No study has yet incorporated the tradition as it stands after Theodoret (d. 460). No one as yet has assembled and described the full collection of relevant patristic passages, much less established patterns of usage across this foundational period. Also lacking is any full survey of what the fathers meant in affirming that human beings could become gods. Finally, no study has asked about the role which pastoral care plays in accounting for the diverse uses reflected in the range of patristic applications of the passage.

Furthermore, the significance of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for the development of doctrine—most typically theosis<sup>10</sup>—and scholarly interest in this doctrine has led to studies which focus specifically on this use of the passage. Although these studies are very valuable in their own right, a singular focus on the relationship between Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and the doctrine of theosis risks a myopic view of the role of the text in the teaching of the early church and a neglect of how the verse’s broader use came to foster this important doctrinal development.<sup>11</sup>

In the generations of scholarship since WWII, the growth of the vibrant field of the history of exegesis has brought new light to bear on how the church fathers understood, engaged, and deployed the Sacred Text. Brian Daley, in identifying six main features of patristic exegesis, illustrates the type of fruit the new studies have borne.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, multiple studies

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on Psalm 82 (LXX 81). In fact, none of the subsequent studies listed here have incorporated either of these works.

<sup>10</sup> Gers-Uphaus takes a unique approach in organizing his work under the rubric of the debate over monotheism.

<sup>11</sup> Kharlamov helpfully notes that for the first several centuries of Christian theologizing deification language appeared only on the margins of theological discourse, with terms that became relatively popular in Alexandria and among the Cappadocians and accepted broadly but without clear definition. Vladimir Kharlamov, “Rhetorical Application of Theosis in Greek Patristic Theology,” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Jeffery A. Wittung and Michael J. Christensen (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 115. Hallonsten warns that occasional deification themes found in various authors should not be confused with the more mature Eastern Orthodox doctrine of theosis. Gösta Hallonsten, “Theosis in Recent Research,” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 287.

<sup>12</sup> Brian E. Daley, “Is Patristic Exegesis Still Useable?” in *The Art of Reading Scripture: Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 69–88. His six descriptors are: (1)

dedicated to the development of the doctrine of theosis in the early church provide the doctrinal context to support the exegetical analysis.<sup>13</sup> Carl Mosser argues that the doctrine of theosis (he prefers theopoiēsis for the earlier patristic tradition)<sup>14</sup> did indeed arise out of the exegetical work of the early church, a tradition which stands in continuity with the preceding Jewish exegesis of the passage.<sup>15</sup> After noting that the analysis of the exegesis of the passage has been neglected by

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recognizing the present reality of God and its impact on the nature of Scripture, (2) understanding the Christian message as a unified narrative, (3) allowing the rule of faith to guide interpretation, (4) seeing the Scripture as both a diversified and unified whole, (5) acknowledging both the “historical” and “for us” aspects of the Scripture, and (6) viewing the Scriptures as a mystery which requires purification and reverence to attain to appropriate readings.

<sup>13</sup> Recent decades have witnessed an upsurge in scholarly interest in deification and theosis. The work of Gross (originally published in 1938 and only recently brought into English) and Russell serve as the classic surveys of the development of the doctrine of deification: Jules Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers*, trans. Paul A. Onica, Reprint (Anaheim: A & C Press, 2002); Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The recent collection of essays edited by Ortiz builds on these works as it endeavors to address the continuity between the Greek teaching and that of the west: Jared Ortiz, ed., *Deification in the Latin Patristic Tradition*, Studies in Early Christianity 6 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019). Several scholars, such as Keating and Meconi, have provided very helpful in-depth studies of deification within the teaching of one Father: Daniel A. Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria*, Oxford Theological Monographs 10 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); David Vincent Meconi, *The One Christ: Augustine’s Theology of Deification* (CUA Press, 2013). Further collections provide yet more sets of specialized studies on the developing tradition with attention to specific thinkers: Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, eds., *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology, Volume One* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Vladimir Kharlamov, ed., *Theosis II: Deification in Christian Theology* (Eugene, Or.: James Clarke, 2011), Ebscohost; John Arblaster and Rob Faesen, eds., *Mystical Doctrines of Deification: Case Studies in the Christian Tradition*, Contemporary Theological Explorations in Mysticism (New York: Routledge, 2019); George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Pananikolaou, eds., *Faith, Reason, and Theosis* (New York: Fordham, forthcoming). Finally, some studies have located the origins of the deification within the pre-Christian paradigms of the ancient world (Litwa), in Pauline soteriology (Blackwell and Cooper), or also in continuity with Johannine ecclesiology (Byers): Benjamin C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); M. David Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul’s Soteriology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012); Jordan Cooper, *Christification: A Lutheran Approach to Theosis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014); Byers, *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, ed., Paul Treblico, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 166 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Typically in these works, however, the significance of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) is only mentioned. Even Russell offers extended analysis of its usage only in his discussion of Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria.

<sup>14</sup> Russell’s “Appendix 2: The Greek Vocabulary of Deification” is the best source to sort out the different terminology. Theopoiēsis (θεοποίησις), first coined by Athanasius, represents the patristic predilection for the verb θεοποιέω, whereas theosis (and the verb θεόω) was frequently employed by Gregory of Nazianzus but only became the standard Christian term in the Byzantine period. The terms are reasonable choices to differentiate the early patristic explorations from later Byzantine developments. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 333–44.

<sup>15</sup> Carl Mosser, “The Earliest Patristic Interpretations of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents, and the Origin of

scholars, he provides an initial exploration of three early authors—Justin, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria.

Finally, the nature of pastoral care in the patristic period has also received scholarly attention in the last few decades. Already in 1977, Allen Johnson in a brief introductory article pointed to the pastoral motivations which guided the varieties of patristic hermeneutics.<sup>16</sup> Some studies have surveyed pastoral practice as a whole.<sup>17</sup> Others have focused on the more intimate relationships of “spiritual direction”<sup>18</sup> or the call to discipleship as a call to a “philosophical life.”<sup>19</sup> The pastoral roles of bishops and priests have received attention, both in general<sup>20</sup> and in particular cases.<sup>21</sup>

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Christian Deification,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 56, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 30–74.

<sup>16</sup> Allen E. Johnson, “Methods and Presuppositions of Patristic Exegesis in the Formation of Christian Personality,” *Dialog* 16, no. 3 (1977): 186–90.

<sup>17</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Day Williams, *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (New York: Harper, 1956); William A. Clebsch and Charles Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Aronson, 1975); Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990); Stanley W. Jackson, *Care of the Psyche: A History of Psychological Healing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Gillian R. Evans, *A History of Pastoral Care* (London: Cassell, 2000). A recent reflection on the applicability of ancient pastoral practice for today can be found in Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God’s People* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper, 1951); Irene Hausherr, *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East*, trans. A. Gythiel (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1990); George E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Arthur P. Urbano, *The Philosophical Life*, Patristic Monograph Series (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Steffen Patzold and Carine van Rhign, *Men in the Middle: Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe*, Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde-Ergänzungsbande (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> R. A. Krupp, *Shepherding the Flock of God: The Pastoral Theology of John Chrysostom*, American University Studies 101 (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); Wendy Mayer, “Patronage, Pastoral Care, and the Role of the Bishop at Antioch,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 55, no. 1 (2001): 58–70; Jan William Drijvers, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Bishop and City*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Geoffrey D. Dunn, “The White Crown of Works: Cyprian’s Early Pastoral Ministry of Almsgiving in Carthage,” *Church History* 73, no. 4 (2004): 715–40; Jaclyn LaRae Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); William Harmless and Allan Fitzgerald, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 2014); Iulian Isbasoiu, “The Pastoral Care and the

While this study does not endeavor to fully flesh out all of the implications of the usage of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for pastoral care, it does depend on the rubric of pastoral care to serve as the guiding principle of interpretation for the patristic choices in their exegesis. Wendy Mayer's identification of seven thematic categories of pastoral care in the early church proves helpful:

These categories are fluid and often themselves intertwined, but they at least allow for a broader view of the issue. They are teaching (i.e., preaching, catechesis, and private instruction); direction for daily life (e.g., counseling, confession), mission (the conversion of both "pagans" and heretics, and the maintenance of orthodoxy); administration (e.g., the *audientia episcopalis*); intercession (e.g., prayer, the ransom of captives); the application of ritualized forms of care (e.g., penance, baptism); and, most familiarly, social welfare.<sup>22</sup>

All of these activities were coordinated to serve to engender and strengthen the life of faith.<sup>23</sup>

Carl A. Volz arrives at a similar conclusion as he considers the range of goals for patristic proclamation: "Pastoral teaching and preaching was crucial to the life of the church. Such proclamation included outreach to non-Christians, defending the faith against its critics, and the preservation of orthodox apostolicity against the threat of heresy, but the primary pastoral focus was teaching and preaching to the faithful."<sup>24</sup> Certainly there are overlapping concerns with pastoral practice today. The spirit of this study stands in accord with those who have argued for the continuing value of patristic exegesis for pastoral practice.<sup>25</sup>

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Priest: Profile in the Study 'On the Priesthood' of Saint John Chrysostom," *Dialogo* 2, no. 1 (2015): 318–26.

<sup>22</sup> Wendy Mayer, "Patronage, Pastoral Care and the Role of the Bishop at Antioch," *Vigiliae Christianae* 55, no. 1 (2001): 60. Claudia Rapp provides a similar list for bishops of Late Antiquity in general. Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> In describing the differing "schools" of Antioch and Alexandria, Frances Young concludes that their hermeneutical practices were united in this ultimate aim: the common desire to "foster the life of faith." Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 185.

<sup>24</sup> Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 97.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., Thomas Oden, Classical Pastoral Care Series, 4 vols. (New York: Crossroad, 1987); Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998); Childers, "Value of Patristic Bible Interpretations."

Standing in the intersection between the recent work in history of exegesis (including recent studies on Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), the development of the doctrine of deification, and the practice of pastoral care, this exploration of patristic teaching and preaching will bring to light the full range of the early Christian understanding and application of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) which has been lacking in previous studies.

### **The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship**

The time has come for a comprehensive study of the patristic exegesis of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). By surveying the use of a single text diachronically through over five centuries of tradition, this effort will return to an approach of focusing on the interpretation of an isolated passage,<sup>26</sup> a method originally practiced in the first generation of scholars of patristic exegesis in the middle of the last century but more recently neglected.<sup>27</sup> This study will demonstrate the continuing significance of following the interpretation of a single key verse through the centuries and observing how it fared at the hands of its interpreters, propelled by different purposes, and constrained by shifting worldviews; it will specifically identify what it contributes to the Fathers' teaching within their pastoral practice. Clearly, such a survey will lose the fine detail of exploring the precise connections and ramifications of the phrase "You are gods" in the theology of each of the authors, but this potential imprecision is reduced by narrowing our exploration to a set of concrete questions: What moves the author to cite the psalm verse? What use does he

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<sup>26</sup> Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1:63.

<sup>27</sup> There are signs that this method may be on the verge of a revival. Besides this thesis, Strawbridge explores the use of 1 Cor. 2:6–16 in a hundred passages among 35 pre-Constantinian authors. She concludes that there was indeed a community of understanding and interpretation which employed the passage for rhetorical argument, apologetic discourse, the exegesis of difficult texts, and discussing the nature of wisdom and Christian formation. Her conclusions resonate with those of this thesis. One might imagine that a sufficient number of such studies might together reveal unforeseen patterns of biblical citation among the Fathers. Jennifer R. Strawbridge, "A Community of Interpretation: The Use of 1 Corinthians 2:6–16 by Early Christians," *Studia Patristica* 63, no. 11 (2013): 69–80.

make of it and why? Whom does he understand the “gods” to be, what makes them gods, and how do (or did or will) they become gods? These questions can be clearly and adequately answered where the psalm verse is located *in situ* within a particular patristic passage.

Our study is also assisted by the exceptional phrasing of the passage—“You are gods”—so unique in the Scriptures that one may presume that another passage could not effectively elicit the same comments or assist in developing the same theological points. Thus, not only does the unique phrasing of the passage facilitate our comprehensive identification of all of its patristic citations, but it frequently leads to distinct areas of their thought and theology which merit comparison.<sup>28</sup> Through this approach, we gain new insights into the way that a particular (and peculiar) Scripture verse came to play a vital role in some of the central teachings of the church. By following the path which the Fathers took, from the Scriptures to the teaching and practice, we acknowledge their respect for Scripture as the norm of doctrine and praxis and we may observe how the articulation of doctrine and practice arose from the study of Scripture itself. The opportunity now lies before us to apply these new approaches and understandings to track precisely how the Fathers employed this key text and so developed their various pastoral articulations of what it means to be a human being on the way toward the ultimate human flourishing—becoming a god, with all that means and does not mean.

### **Methodology**

The method of analysis for this project involves five discrete steps: (1) identifying the relevant patristic passages; (2) evaluating the understanding and usage of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in each instance, as well as any intertextual connections with other biblical passages; (3) identifying

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<sup>28</sup> Jüngling observes that the less than obvious meaning of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) practically required that those who cited the text should also explain it. Jüngling, *Der Tod der Götter*, 16.

any notable exegetical moves which serve that understanding and usage; (4) observing pastoral motivations which lead to the citation or guide its exegesis; and (5) discovering larger patterns of usage, interpretation, and intertextuality among the various authors over time. Step two also focuses on any specific patristic comments regarding the identity of the “gods” referenced in Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and, for human beings, the way they become gods. The study begins with an evaluation of citations from the earliest patristic sources to Maximus the Confessor in the middle of the seventh century.<sup>29</sup> He is identified as an upper boundary for the study because the doctrine of deification reaches its fundamental maturity with Maximus’s writing. Finally, as a practical limit, the study analyzes only authors extant in Greek and Latin.

The principal method of identifying the patristic citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) was to search for key terms in the CETEDOC and TLG databases. The first searches on the phrases θεοὶ ἐστε and *dii estis* were made in the late fall of 2018, with an update having been made in the summer of 2020. These searches on “You are gods” quickly identified more than two hundred passages.<sup>30</sup> A further search on the phrase “he called them gods” (ἐκείνους εἶπε θεοὺς; *illos dixit deos*) revealed an additional set of one Latin and seven Greek passages. As the research then came to printed texts, those with a Scripture index were double-checked to identify any further citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) (and its reference in John 10:34). The index at *Biblia Patristica*

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<sup>29</sup> “Patristic” is here meant loosely, because the first uses appeared among the “heretics.” Maximus makes a natural upper limit of the study because of his contribution to a full-bodied theology of deification: “Deification, which is a central theme in the spirituality of the Christian East, has in the work of the Confessor one of its most significant and complete expressions.” Pauline Allen, Neil Bronwen, and Jean-Claude Larchet. “The Mode of Deification,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Oxford Handbooks Online.

<sup>30</sup> A handful of passages which cited Isa. 41:22 were removed from the study. It reads in part, “Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that *you are gods*.” Comparing the interpretation of this verse with that of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) would be another profitable study.

also proved helpful in catching a few additional passages and allusions,<sup>31</sup> as did compilations from other scholars. The number of passages comes to 192 from Greek Fathers and 108 from Latin for a grand total of 300; the number of authors is basically 76, with a slight majority being Greek.<sup>32</sup> The Chronology in the front matter of this dissertation offers the full list. English translations were employed where possible and these were often modified in consultation with the original text, if at times only slightly. As the Chronology indicates, many of the translations are the author's own.<sup>33</sup> Due to library restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, it was impossible to locate page numbers for all of the primary texts found through the CETEDOC and TLG database searches. In these cases, the Chronology also lists the TLG digital references or CETEDOC Clavis numbers to assist the reader in locating the text. Therefore, where there is no page number reference in a footnote, the reader should consult the Chronology which will provide the clavis number (CETEDOC) or TLG number to locate the text in those databases. The additional reference specifications in the footnote will be sufficient to find the specific passage.

Having established relevant texts and proper translations, the procedure asks the following questions of the text: What occasioned the citation of the psalm? That is, what rhetorical, exegetical, pastoral, or theological problem moved the author to employ the psalm verse? How does the author understand the passage? That is, who are the gods and what makes them gods? If Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) is also cited, how does the author explain who dies "like human beings/a human being" and who is the "prince" who falls? What kind of reasoning (or even what

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<sup>31</sup> "Bibindex," l'Institut des Sources Chrétiennes à Lyon, 2015, <http://www.bibindex.mom.fr/>.

<sup>32</sup> The balance comes to something like 41 Greek authors and 33 Latin. A precise counting of the number of authors would require a confident determination of authorship of every single text, something not possible at this point in scholarship.

<sup>33</sup> To this point, the limited amount of this material which has been translated into English has certainly discouraged a comprehensive narrative of this exegetical history.

rhetorical strategies) moved the author from the text to his conclusions? Also, what other passages either provide the instigation to turn to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) or, conversely, elucidate this verse?

Finally, the patterns of interpretation and intertextuality can be observed through the course of the centuries. To assist tracking the intertextual links, a spreadsheet was developed to show which other verses were invoked by each author, listed chronologically. The spreadsheet also helped track some of the key themes among the authors. Patterns of usage, interpretation, and intertextuality could then be correlated to the author and his historical context. Of particular interest were those cases in which five or more authors linked Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to the same passages of Scripture. Instances of multiple authors associating the psalm with another particular verse demonstrate a strong linkage in the tradition.

The dating of texts depended on standard scholarly introductions to texts as well as patrologies, largely Moreschini and Norelli's two volumes of *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*.<sup>34</sup> Scholars debate the authorship and/or date of some passages, however. In these cases, the evidence was retained for analysis, although more as illustrative of possibilities rather than foundational for firm historical conclusions. The research is presented by centuries, with authors placed in that century where the majority of their mature work appears. Thus, while citations from Augustine range from 393 to 426, he is placed among the fifth century authors.

The work is organized in the following way. The next section introduces philosophical resources for the construction of the early Christian worldview by exploring how philosophical paradigms from Aristotelianism and Platonism assisted the Fathers in distinguishing God from

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<sup>34</sup> Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005).

the “gods.” Five chapters survey periods of patristic citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6): the second and third centuries, the outbreak of the Arian controversy in the fourth, the rise of monastic bishops bookmarked by the Cappadocians through Jerome, the Christological controversies of the fifth, and then the move into the Medieval period in the sixth and most of the seventh. Each period evidences new pastoral challenges and new applications of the text, while the Fathers nevertheless consistently observe the clear parameters of the Christian proclamation (the norm of the *regula fidei*). The conclusion draws together the observations regarding the malleability of human nature, doctrinal norms from the *regula fidei* and from patristic exegetical practices, specifically the development of traditional intertextual linkages which was a prime hermeneutical principle in patristic exegesis. The teaching and preaching of the Scripture is thus seen to take place under the guidance of both the broader *hypothesis* of Scripture and the mutual illumination of specific passages. Finally, the various pastoral motivations which drew the Fathers to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and the various pastoral applications of the text will be brought to light.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EXCURSUS ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT OF THE PATRISTIC INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 82:6

How can human beings be said to become gods in any way? Our modern conception of God and our very definition of the title “God” impedes our understanding of what the Fathers meant (and did not mean) by their affirmations of deification. The philosophical resources available to them certainly assisted them in reading the Scriptures as a narrative of the God who makes gods. Platonism and Aristotelianism in particular could explain how two entities could partake of both sameness and difference and share in the same name or, to put it less Platonically, how two such entities could be given the same name though they were neither identical nor duplicates. The church fathers, as shepherds within the church, took advantage of these philosophical and linguistic possibilities in order to communicate the message of Christ to their world.

#### Platonic Worldview in Evidence

In large measure, much patristic exegesis of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) demonstrably observes the structures of a Platonic worldview.<sup>1</sup> Six platonic principles, borrowed from R. E. Allen,<sup>2</sup> and their applications in this context follow. This summary also references the work of Khaled Anatolios, who detailed the utility of Platonic concepts for a Christian understanding of the

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<sup>1</sup> Already the various Greek terms for “participation” in Christ, many of which are taken over from the Platonic tradition, suggest the philosophical framework. Of course, some authors appear to maintain a much more “nominal” understanding of the divine name God grants to humanity, e.g., Ps.-Chrysostom, *Hom. de capto Eutropia* (PG 52:403).

<sup>2</sup> R. E. Allen, “Participation and Predication in Plato’s Middle Dialogues,” *The Philosophical Review* 69, no. 2 (1960): 161–62.

Creator-creature relationship, specifically with respect to Athanasius though clearly reflective of broader patristic thought.<sup>3</sup>

(1) *As an answer to the problem of the unity and diversity of the world (“the one and the many”), particulars are understood to participate in Forms.* When the Fathers read of problematic references to “gods” in the Old Testament text, this resolution of participation stood ready at hand to account for the relationship of the “many” to the “One.” They could maintain monotheism in a strict sense, even as they followed biblical models of granting the existence of other “gods.” The potential for linguistic confusion could be eliminated by ontological differentiation, by distinguishing the participating “gods” from the God in whom they participate.<sup>4</sup>

(2) *This participation renders the particulars recognizable and nameable.*<sup>5</sup> Just as particulars are named after the form in which they participate, so the creatures who participate in God may be called gods. This attribution, however, is equivocal in that its significance differs when referring to the form or the particular:<sup>6</sup> the “gods” are not God in the same way that God is

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<sup>3</sup> Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998). Anatolios himself traces Athanasius’s use of Platonic categories of participation for conceptualizing the relationship between God and the world to the influence of Origen. Origen could also speak of participation within the Trinity, but he differentiated that from the participation of creatures in God, which was accidental rather than essential. Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 24. Before Origen, Irenaeus deploys corresponding language of divine Giver and created recipients. Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 19–20.

<sup>4</sup> Anatolios describes the difference between the realm of the particulars (“the realm of Becoming”) and of the forms (“the realm of Being”) as “the most radical ontological distinction in Plato.” Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 7. If anything, the *Timaeus*, likely the work of Plato most read by the Fathers, shows “an increasing emphasis on the transcendence of the noetic sphere and the supra-transcendence of the One or the Good” which must be linked to the phenomenal sphere “by mediatorial means.” Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> David Sedley, “Form-Particular Resemblance in Plato’s *Phaedo*,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 106, no. 3 (September 2006): 311, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2006.00199.x>.

<sup>6</sup> Allen, “Participation and Predication,” 150. Nickolas Pappas also affirms the distinction between univocal and equivocal predication. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Plato’s Aesthetics,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-aesthetics/#ForBea>.

God. The particulars bear the title only in a derivative way and do not attain to the ontological status of the absolute.

(3) *Forms are, in a way, causative of their association with their particulars.*<sup>7</sup> The patristic discussion around Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) does not merely answer the question why we call Christians gods as point (2) would suggest; it typically sees the naming of Christians as “gods” as a kind of adoption through God’s own act of grace. Also, this principle suggested to the early Christian mind that the God who is the *I Am* (ὁ ὢν, Exod. 3:14, LXX) causes the existence of all other entities, that is, he is uniquely the Creator and all else depends on him for its existence.<sup>8</sup> Of course, this personal conception of the Deity departs from the platonic model of the divine, even if the affirmation of divine agency and initiative partly echoes the causative effect of the forms.

(4) *Particulars possess distinctive characteristics due to this participation in the form.*<sup>9</sup> In the context of the discussion around Psalm 82 (LXX 81), those who are gods behave in a godly way on account of their relationship of clinging to, believing in, and loving God. Deification necessarily entails ethical consequences as the deified live “according to God.” A particular receives its attributes from participation in the form, so that participation accounts for the necessary potential to live a godly life. In the words of Anatolios, because the realm of Becoming is derived from and depends on the realm of Being, there exists between them a “radical relationship of ontological communication. . . . This communication grounds some kind

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<sup>7</sup> Allen, “Participation and Predication,” 150; Sedley, “Form-Particular Resemblance,” 320.

<sup>8</sup> David Meconi, for example, begins his discussion of Augustine’s theology of deification with its grounding in God’s act of creation and the way that all creatures reflect something of God by their very nature. Meconi, *The One Christ: Augustine’s Theology of Deification*.

<sup>9</sup> Allen, “Participation and Predication,” 153–55. “The reflection does not *resemble* the original; rather, it is a *resemblance of* the original. This is its nature, and the whole of its nature.” Allen, “Participation and Predication,” 155. Particulars “derive their *whole* character and existence from Forms.” Allen, “Participation and Predication,” 161. See also Sedley, “Form-Particular Resemblance,” 320.

of similitude, however distant.”<sup>10</sup> That this potential is not automatically realized provides much grist for the mill of the church’s paraenetic preaching involving Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6).<sup>11</sup> As we shall see, there are a number of other “divine attributes” which Christians attain through salvation in Christ—immortality and incorruptibility, clearly, but also truthfulness, faithfulness, working miracles, gifts of knowledge, works of love, and more.

The Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism which influenced the Fathers were themselves constructed through an eclectic appropriation of concepts from other philosophical schools, including Stoicism. According to the Stoic understanding of definition, a definition need not capture the essence of an object, as is the case in Aristotelianism, but only a unique characteristic.<sup>12</sup> Since the Stoics defined a god as “a living being, immortal, rational, perfect in happiness, unreceptive of any evil, provident over the world and its contents,”<sup>13</sup> a human creature who came to possess one or more of these characteristics might legitimately fall within the definition of “god.” Christians, in ascribing what they deemed to be uniquely divine characteristics to those who have been saved and sanctified by God, applied a broader definition of “god” which did not entail ascribing the divine essence to them.

(5) *Particulars are distinct from forms and often imperfectly and imprecisely mimic them.*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> The rest of creation receives its proper ordering by the immediate presence of God within it; human beings, however, are not rightly patterned after God without the involvement of their own will. Anatolios offers this description of the way in which patristic thought might maintain both the ontological dominance of God and the need for a fitting human response: “We may perhaps articulate this attenuation, in seemingly paradoxical terms, by saying that humanity’s special position is that of being ordained to actively maintain its own passivity.” Anatolios, 61.

<sup>12</sup> Kisor Kumar Chakrabarti, *Definition and Induction: A Historical and Comparative Study*, Monographs of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy 13 (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), 26.

<sup>13</sup> Chakrabarti, *Definition and Induction*, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, “Participation and Predication,” 155–56. This concept is clearly found in Plato, *Phaed.* 74a, 74d–75b. To know the truth is to distinguish the particular from the form. See Plato, *Republic* V.476d and Sedley, “Form-Particular Resemblance in Plato’s *Phaedo*,” 309, 313. In the words of Cyril of Alexandria, “How could what

The church fathers repeatedly underscore that the “gods” are not God. This parallels the Platonic framework in which particulars never become forms. Anatolios describes this conceptuality in the thought of Athanasius:

The Platonic notion of participation is ideal for Athanasius’s task precisely because it signifies simultaneously relations of both opposition and similitude. For that which is participated and that which participates formally constitute a relation of strict mutual opposition, . . . and the opposition perseveres within the likeness itself, insofar as the likeness is grounded in and through it. In short, that which is participated transcends that which participates it, in the very act of granting it a “share” or likeness of itself.<sup>15</sup>

Following Plato’s own phrase, creatures may become gods only “insofar as this is possible.”<sup>16</sup> Occasionally church fathers will identify various characteristics which are reserved for God alone (e.g., that he is the Creator, that he is eternal, that he is all-knowing, that he alone is worshipped).<sup>17</sup> Also, when church fathers depict Christians in this life as already “gods,” they typically do so to indicate the kind of striving toward perfection which is fitting for their God-given calling and status.<sup>18</sup>

(6) *Forms alone are immutable and eternally themselves; particulars are mutable and may either assimilate to or depart from their exemplar.*<sup>19</sup> Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7), with its verdict that the

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has a nature of becoming be God by nature? Well said, my friend. For each remains in his own nature.” *Trin.* 520, 33–34. Gregory of Elvira, however, can note a strong conformity of a god with God: “Something that is like something else is such as *its exemplar throughout.*” Gregory of Elvira, *Tractatus Origenis de libris sanctarum scripturarum*, tract. 1, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 50.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Theaet.* 176b.

<sup>17</sup> Bauckham traces this practice of distinguishing the uniqueness of the true God by his characteristics back to Judaism. Specifically, late Second Temple Judaism acknowledged that God alone was Creator and Ruler over creation and thus solely to be worshipped. He reads the work of the Fathers as translating the same point into a philosophical key with a preference for other distinguishing attributes such as incorruptibility and immutability. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 7, 9, 11.

<sup>18</sup> In the Platonic corpus, *Phaed.* 75a appears to be unique in depicting the relationship between certain particulars and their forms as “striving,” a suggestive image for the relationship between Christians and Christ per Phil. 3:12–14. Sedley, “Form-Particular Resemblance in Plato’s *Phaedo*,” 321–24.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, *Phaed.* 78d–79a

gods will “die like human beings” and “fall like any prince,” illustrates the mutability of particulars.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, this mutability of the realm of becoming means that particulars may come to possess any number of characteristics. Thus, Chrysostom could encourage his hearers to make themselves into angels or even gods on the basis of the God-given potentiality of human nature.

As the illustrations above already suggest, the Platonic paradigm of participation could provide elements for a conceptual framework for the Christian proclamation of creation, fall, salvation, sanctification and glorification. The Christological controversies of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries also played out a set of debates over the Scriptures conducted largely on the field of Platonic premises. With reference to the above points (1–6) of Allen’s enumerated Platonic principles, the deity of the Word could be argued on the basis of (1) his singularity as the “only-Begotten Son” and the identification of the Word as the eternal Word; (2–3) how his coming effected the transformation of human beings into gods and granted them this name; (3) how he could be identified as the Creator; (4) how his salvation transformed moral life with godliness and granted immortality to mere creatures; (6) how he, as God, was eternally unchanging.

Thus, when the church fathers cited Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), whether in reference to the individual’s salvation or to the Christ who saved them, we often find that their language of the “gods” participating in God invokes Platonic principles which help structure their thought and clarify their message.

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<sup>20</sup> “Also characteristic of Origen’s conception is an emphasis on the fragility of human participation in the divine, both because this participation is accidental and not essential and because humanity’s orientation is alterable. (*Peri Archon* 1.5.5, 1.8.3). Alterability is thus conceived as a quintessentially creaturely problem in Origen and perhaps even more so in Athanasius.” Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 24. Again, such remarks apply broadly to the patristic perspective.

## Aristotelian Logic as Support

Platonic philosophical propositions, however, were not the only helpful set of tools for the church fathers as they negotiated how human beings could (and could not) become “gods.” Aristotle, too, whose rhetoric and logic were taught in the schools and whose metaphysics had, to a degree, been incorporated into the Neoplatonic system, contributed to the language, limitations, and possibilities of deification.<sup>21</sup>

At the beginning of the *Categories*, Aristotle offers the case of a man and his image as an example of a homonym, since both are called “a man.”<sup>22</sup> The recognition that a single term can reference related items of different essences lays the groundwork for the multivalence of the name “G/god” which the Fathers propose. They easily appropriated Aristotle’s illustration to relate the concept of homonymy to God and those bearing his image, human beings.

Aristotle demonstrably influenced both Philo and Augustine in their exploration of divine immutability and human mutability.<sup>23</sup> Beyond accidental properties (which themselves can be separable or inseparable from a substance), Aristotle also presents the concept of an *idion*, “something which does not show the essence of a thing, but belongs to that thing alone and is

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<sup>21</sup> Beyond elementary rhetoric and logic, the Cappadocians engaged in a rethinking of Aristotelian logic in their development of Trinitarian theology. A century later, there occurred something of an Aristotelian revival in an early Byzantine scholastic movement. See Christophe Erismann, “Logic in Byzantium,” in *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, ed. Anthony Kaldellis and Niketas Siniossoglou (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 365; David Bradshaw, “The Presence of Aristotle in Byzantine Theology,” in *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, ed. David Bradshaw and Niketas Siniossoglou (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 386.

<sup>22</sup> Bradshaw, “Presence of Aristotle,” 392. Russell notes the established fact that, in the case of Cyril of Alexandria, Aristotle’s *Categories* as well as others of his texts clearly held their place in the educational curriculum and left their mark on the works of the Father. Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, ed. Carol Harrison, *The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 2000), 5.

<sup>23</sup> William E. Mann, “Immutability and Predication: What Aristotle Taught Philo and Augustine,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 22, no. 1–2 (1987): 2–39.

counterpredicated of it.”<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, this clearly relates to immutability as an *idion* of God. In identifying the unique deity of God, the Fathers will characteristically point to his immutability and his eternity as distinctive of his unique essence. At the same time, the concept of an *idion* (or, at least, of an “inseparable accident”) helps to explain how the Fathers took passages such as Ps. 116:11 (LXX 115:2, “Every human being is a liar”) and 1 Cor. 3:3 (those engaged in jealousy and strife are walking “according to a human being”) as indicating intrinsically sinful characteristics of human identity without making those vices definitional of the essence of humanity.<sup>25</sup> To be delivered from sinful characteristics would mean a departure from such idionic properties. Some Fathers would describe this as transcending human nature<sup>26</sup> and others would speak of the restoration or renewal of human identity.<sup>27</sup>

But does Aristotelian logic with its emphasis on definitional characteristics of nature permit the possibility of the transformation of the human being “beyond nature”? Of course, even with Aristotelian logic, natures are not static; they may perish or be transformed into something else, even as a living tree may become a log for a home and then a burnt pile of ash—a “substantial

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<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Top.* 1.5.102a18.

<sup>25</sup> “In order for a thing to undergo a change in its inseparable accidents, if it has any, it must cease to be the kind of thing it is. Nothing short of substantial change is sufficient to bring about change in an inseparable accident.” Mann, “Immutability and Predication,” 27.

<sup>26</sup> We will find that Clement of Alexandria and Origen normalize the description of salvation as entailing either transcending or leaving behind humanity.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory of Nyssa exemplifies a fully-defined position of salvation as the renewal of human nature through moral transformation: “For it is clear to everybody that the object in view in receiving the saving birth is the renewal and change of our nature. Yet humanity in itself does not admit of a change as the result of baptism; neither the power of rational thought, nor the faculty of understanding, nor the capacity for exact knowledge, nor any other of the special characteristics of human nature undergo a change. For the change would assuredly be for the worse, if any one of these particular features of our nature were replaced by something else. . . . Clearly it is when the evil characteristics of our nature have been blotted out that the change for the better takes place. . . . We become ‘clean’ in our wills.” Gregory of Nyssa, *Catech. Or.* 40; *The Catechetical Oration of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. James Herbert Srawley, Early Church Classics (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917), 116–17, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015013333003>.

change.”<sup>28</sup> Yet, when the acorn becomes a grand tree, it simply fulfills its natural potential. Neither of these illustrations, helpful though they are, fully fit the patristic concept of becoming gods.

The transformation of the human creature by the Spirit of God actualizes a God-given potential to transcend human nature which had been part of God’s original design for his creature,<sup>29</sup> so that the human being may become “god” by grace.<sup>30</sup> Eschatologically, the human creature fulfills its destiny to become an image of God when its virtues are both maximized to their full (yet finite) potential and fixed as such in a constant state. When the full measure of goodness, love, truthfulness, etc. will become inseparable and eternal attributes of the human creature, then the sanctified may even be said to partake of God’s own goodness and immutability.

To conclude this section, both the Platonic and Aristotelian systems allowed for a possible conceptualization of human beings becoming gods. The first facilitated this by the mechanism of participation of particulars in forms which explained the assimilation of divine characteristics and the name of “god.” The second granted a transformation of substances, especially in cases when inseparable accidents were sloughed off. It also posited the homonymous use of names in cases when images bore the resemblance of their prototype. In fact, once given certain presuppositions drawn from the Scriptures, both systems *required* some affirmation that human beings could become gods and offered resources to accommodate this need. The Platonic propositions lead one to read union with God through Christ after the pattern of form and

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<sup>28</sup> Mann, “Immutability and Predication,” 25.

<sup>29</sup> See Jerome’s *Tractatus* on Psalm 82 (LXX 81).

<sup>30</sup> Cf., Paul O’Callaghan, *Children of God in the World: An Introduction to Theological Anthropology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016).

particular by which those who participated in God would be gods in a lesser and derived sense. In an Aristotelian system, the scriptural identification of humanity with spiritual blindness, sinfulness, judgment, mortality, etc. requires a transformation of substance in order to attain freedom from such accidents intransigently linked with fallen human nature. Finally, both systems offered safeguards which prevented the full identification of creatures with God. The Platonic particular never fully attains to the status of the form to which it adheres; the title “god” is always derivative of the one true God. The Aristotelian mutable and composite substance can only approximate the eternal immutability of the God who is perfect Spirit;<sup>31</sup> in this case, the title “god” is homonymous. The Aristotelian account of definition also required determination of something’s “cause” in various senses;<sup>32</sup> when applied in a Christian context, this, too, would support a distinction between the uncaused Creator and the caused creation. While each system had elements which could have been deployed against the Christian articulation of deification (one thinks of the various intermediate emanations of a Neoplatonic system or the denial of creation in Aristotelianism), Christian theologians of this period attempted to assimilate only those elements from these philosophies which they deemed would further their proclamation of the salvation effected by Christ.

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<sup>31</sup> Anatolios notes how the Aristotle’s prime mover is even more transcendent and removed from creation than Plato’s concept of the Good. Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Chakrabarti, *Definition and Induction*, 20.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FOUNDATIONAL EFFORTS: ANTE-NICENE USAGE OF PSALM 82:6

#### The First Traditions: “Heretical” Hermeneutics at Work

The first two exegetes of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for whom we have evidence are now deemed to stand outside of the circle of orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless, both are instructive in how the text will and will not be employed in the Christian tradition that follows.

Tertullian’s *Ad Marcion* (written ca. 205–213) indicates that Marcion (ca. 85–ca. 160, *fl.* ca. 140–ca. 160) had argued on the basis of Ps. 82:1, 6 (LXX 81:1, 6) that the name “God” did not necessarily indicate the absolute deity of the Creator: “As therefore the attribute of supremacy would be inappropriate to these [“gods”], although they are called gods, so is it to the Creator.”<sup>1</sup> Namely, the title was multivalent and therefore ambiguous. Thus, even though the Scriptures called the Creator “God,” he might just as likely be understood as a god, some lesser being under the Most High.<sup>2</sup> In the Christian tradition, this recognition of the multivalence of the title “g/God” will become common.<sup>3</sup> Marcion’s didactic concern—to teach the nature of the true God—also resonates with subsequent pastoral use of the Psalm. In contrast with Marcion, however, the identification of the Creator with the true God will become axiomatic for orthodox

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.7 (ANF 3:275).

<sup>2</sup> Philosophical theories which included such subordinate deities were both popular and popularized at the time: “In addition to these ‘mainstream’ philosophers [i.e., Antiochus, Eudorus of Alexandria, Philo, and Plutarch], the Middle Platonic period includes the more esoteric systems of the Gnostics, the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. All of these involved an ‘astral piety’ with a notion of planetary powers and intra-cosmic daemons mediating between humanity and the highest cosmic deities.” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Middle Platonism,” accessed May 14, 2020, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/midplato/>.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Ps.-Athanasius will observe that naming the Holy Spirit “G/god” has little theological significance in and of itself: “That is nothing exceptional (οὐδὲν γὰρ τοῦτο μέγα).” *Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos* (PG 28:1297). The author is unimpressed by his opponents’ willingness to name the Holy Spirit “G/god”; he requires a full confession of unqualified deity.

interpreters.<sup>4</sup>

The author of *The Refutation of All Heresies*, writing in the environs of Rome around A.D. 222, records a heretical application of the verse among the Naassenes in the mid to late second century.<sup>5</sup> The arcane text begins with a conflation of a couple of lines from Homer (*Il.* 14.201, 246) to describe the process of the generation of gods:

This one, [Homer] says, is Ocean, origin of gods and of human beings. He eternally turns by ebb and flow, sometimes up, sometimes down. Now, he claims, when Ocean flows down, humans are generated, but when he flows up—to the wall, the palisade, the Gleaming Rock—gods are born. This is the meaning of the scriptural verse: “I declared: You are gods and all of you sons of the Most High.” You are gods if you hurry to flee from Egypt and cross the Red Sea into the desert (that is, after you flee from the mixture below to “the Jerusalem above, mother of the living”). But if you turn back to Egypt (that is, to the mixture below), you will die like human beings. All generation below, he says, is mortal, whereas that which is born above is immortal. For the spiritual one—not the fleshly—is born from water alone and spirit. But the one below is fleshly.<sup>6</sup>

The passage depends on Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) to make the contrast between the “gods” and those who “die like human beings.” The first flee the created reality below to ascend to the heavenly Jerusalem (cf., Gal. 4:26); the second turn toward creation (“Egypt”) to become mortal. While the contrast between mortal humanity and immortal deity is familiar, a number of key elements otherwise pervasive throughout the early Christian tradition are notably absent: the gift of grace, the Creator-creature distinction, the unique status of the divinity of the Savior, and the nominal or derived “divine” status of the believer. For its part, the Gnostic text presents a call

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<sup>4</sup> For his part, Tertullian turns the tables on Marcion with the observation that Marcion’s own Most High God cannot be assumed to be God either just because he bears the title (which he shares with arrogant rulers and pagan idols). Rather, the essence of the true God is properly correlated to his identity as the unbegotten and unmade eternal Creator of all. Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.13.

<sup>5</sup> M. David Litwa, “You Are Gods: Deification in the Naassene Writer and Clement of Alexandria,” *Harvard Theological Review* 110, no. 1 (2017): 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.7.39 (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, ed. Joshua L. Langseth, trans. M. David Litwa, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 40 [Atlanta: SBL, 2016], 227–29).

toward individual ascent through rejection of the lower realm of creation and the promise of (unrestricted?) deity.<sup>7</sup> This passage represents a dramatic foil to the whole of the Christian tradition, both that earliest tradition contemporary to it and all that is to follow. It does, however, intimate how the psalm text can become part of an exhortation to embrace a life which eschews the unspiritual human values of this world and to ascend as a response to a higher calling, something to be found in many of the Fathers to follow.

Marcion uses Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to deny that even the Creator is God, while the Naassene writer employs it to underscore the natural divinity of the believer. In terms of philosophical appropriation, Marcion misapplies the Aristotelian principle of homonymy and too easily assimilates the Platonic conception of intermediary deities to the Creator;<sup>8</sup> the Naassenes appear to coalesce the ascending character of the saved with an ontological identity with the one God. Together, these two earliest “Christian” examples demonstrate the two extremes which Christian interpreters will avoid and disavow.

### **The Earliest Patristic Tradition: Trailblazers for New Pathways**

Four extant authors of the second and early third century illustrate the initial significance of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) for the theology of the church: Justin Martyr (d. 165),<sup>9</sup> Irenaeus (*fl. ca.* 175–180), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 136–215) and Pseudo-Hippolytus (*fl.* 212–235). The

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<sup>7</sup> This reading contrasts with that of David Litwa, who sees the passage as an example of Christian Gnostic exegesis strongly centered on Christ and creatively reinterpreting the Homeric text through the structure of the biblical narrative. Nevertheless, also Litwa’s reading acknowledges in this passage the inherent deity of descending and ascending humanity which returns to the place from which it had fallen. Litwa, “You Are Gods,” 127–32.

<sup>8</sup> The Middle Platonism of this period placed an “increasing emphasis on a transcendent first principle” and typically safeguarded this transcendence “by relegating contact with the world to distinct subordinate entities.” Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 10–11.

<sup>9</sup> Many of the *vivit* or the *flourit* dates of the Fathers are drawn from Frances M. Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth, *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xxii–xxv. After that, we follow Moreschini and Norelli, *Greek and Latin Literature*.

import of these authors cannot be overstated as these interpretations of the passage anticipate *in nuce* much of the tradition which follows.

### Justin Martyr in Dialogue with the Jews

Justin Martyr was a mid-second-century missionary whose dialogues and debates with others carried forth their evangelistic aim under the guise of philosophical discourse.<sup>10</sup> His *Dialogue with Trypho*, while not necessarily a record of an actual debate, nevertheless captures the spirit of his pastoral concern to lead others to the truth of Christ. In it, he turns to Psalm 82 (LXX 81) not to defend the sonship of Christ, as Jesus does in John 10, but that of believers.<sup>11</sup> In an apologetic response to the perceived Jewish charge that it is inappropriate for Christians to claim the identity of children of God, Justin employs the psalm to depict Adam and Eve as those who had been called “sons” and “gods” but who lost that status through disobedience. Justin delineates the characteristics of their “divinity” as impassibility and immortality.<sup>12</sup> The “divine” status that had been lost in sin has now been restored to believers in Christ. Their conformity to the divine will through the salvation effected by Christ has returned them to the original human identity as true children of God.<sup>13</sup> Justin also begins the long tradition of identifying Satan as the

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<sup>10</sup> BBKL, s.v., “Justinus,” 1992, OCLC.org.

<sup>11</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 24.

<sup>12</sup> Impassibility *ἀπάθεια* becomes a popular patristic term for one aspect of sanctification. Taken over from Stoicism, the Church Fathers employ it not to indicate a state of robotic freedom from emotion but a rational state of control over the emotions governed by Christ. Immortality, already associated with divinity in the Hellenistic mind, is included among the promises granted to believers in the New Testament. Cf., 1 Cor. 15:53–54. Mosser argues that Justin links Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to Adam and Eve because this connection is already made in an earlier testimony source. Mosser, “Earliest Patristic Interpretations,” 37.

<sup>13</sup> Christians are “both called and in reality are . . . God’s true children” (θεοῦ τέκνα ἀληθινὰ καλούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν). Justin, *Dial.* 123.9.4. (E.J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915], TLG); Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ed. Michael Slusser, trans. Thomas B. Falls, Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 340. In *1 Apol.* 10.1–4, Justin correlates the attainment of incorruptibility, impassibility, and fellowship with God with imitating divine virtues. This is simply a rephrasing of the same concept of human fulfillment he is alluding to in *Dial.* 24.

prince whose paradigmatic fall gets referenced in Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7). In the chapter's final line, he mentions that he has defended the deity of Christ previously in his work. This move separates the logic of the Sonship of Christ from the sonship of Christians as of a different kind and thus preserves Christ's unique status. Justin's central instinct is to follow the implications of John 10 in linking Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) to the status of Christians before God. In this way he establishes the pattern maintained by most of the subsequent Fathers.

### Irenaeus in Opposition to the Gnostics

Irenaeus is known to us chiefly as a defender of the faith against the Gnostic interpretations prevalent in his day. A bishop in Lyons, Irenaeus employs the psalm passage three times in his magnum opus, *Adversus haereses*, where he not only lays out the teaching of the “heretics” but also counters their arguments with his own scriptural exegesis and theological vision.<sup>14</sup> Like Justin, he relates the passage to the story of Adam and Eve. He significantly adds the theme of adoption, which will function through the tradition to differentiate the sonship of Christians from that Sonship of Christ “by nature.” Affirming immortality as the aspect of divinity attained by humanity, he augments this by grounding it in the restoration of the image of God through humanity's union with the Word brought about by God's goodness and love.<sup>15</sup> For Irenaeus, however, this restoration is more like a second creation which elevates humanity beyond its initial vulnerability to the forces of the passions and death. It makes humans, for the first time,

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<sup>14</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.6.1; 3.19.1; 4.38.4.

<sup>15</sup> Offering an excellent recent study on the theology of Irenaeus and its engagement with classical rhetorical and philosophical training, Briggman argues that Irenaeus employs Stoic concepts of mixture to envision how humanity attains to incorruptibility and immortality through the indwelling divine “Word-Son” (Briggman's term) through a union which keeps each nature intact. Anthony Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 165–68.

immortal gods.<sup>16</sup> Irenaeus’s boldest contribution is to read the psalm as evidence for the believer’s eventual “ascent into God,” a phrase which suggests a deeply intimate union and which foreshadows the Neoplatonic thought that would move toward dominating patristic interpretations in the third century.<sup>17</sup> This union does not bridge the Creator-creature divide for, as Anthony Briggman points out, Irenaeus predicates unique characteristics to God: principally infinity and simplicity, along with the correlative characteristics of transcendence, incomprehensibility, immanence, immateriality and atemporality.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Irenaeus opens another line of reasoning, related to the rhetorical studies of the day, by which he differentiates three distinct senses of the name “G/god”: the proper sense for the true God, a derived and limited sense appropriate for Christians, and an improper sense applied to idols.<sup>19</sup> This sort of observation, itself a development and redeployment of Marcion’s argument, will also find its resonance throughout the tradition. To pinpoint his central pastoral concern, we see Irenaeus explicating the nature of salvation within the structure of a Christian doctrine of creation.

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<sup>16</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.38.

<sup>17</sup> ἡ εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἀνόδος. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.19.28, 1 (L. Doutreleau and A. Rousseau, *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies*, book 3, vol. 2, Sources chrétiennes 211 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1974], TLG). Briggman maintains, with good likelihood on the basis of the correspondences between Irenaeus’s thought and Stoic mixture theory, that Irenaeus’s vision of union does not entail a departure from humanity: “The absorption of corruptibility and mortality does not involve the diminution or transformation of the substance or qualities of the human being. . . . There is always one and the same human life, capable of manipulation, but ever human.” Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 167–68.

<sup>18</sup> Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.6.1. St. Paul also distinguishes false gods as those “not being gods by nature” (Gal. 4:8). The study of the multivalence of words reaches back to Aristotle and earlier. Julie K. Ward, *Aristotle on Homonymy: Dialectic and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Briggman has demonstrated that Irenaeus was well versed in the classical grammatical and rhetorical tradition. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 10–11, 33. The tension over multivalence in Irenaeus’s own thought is demonstrated by his balancing position in *Haer.* 3.8.3, 71 where he directly rejects any naming of creatures as Lord and God: Only the Word and God are rightly (*juste*) called Lord and God, while visible creatures ought not to be included under this name nor to assume it for themselves (*non iam eiusdem uocabuli percipibilia esse neque iuste id uocabulum sumere debere*).

## Clement of Alexandria in Edifying the Faithful

After his own quest for truth brought him through philosophy to Christianity, Clement of Alexandria came to serve as the head of the famous catechetical school of that city, an intellectual hub with a significant Gnostic heritage.<sup>20</sup> Clement's approach cast the claims of Christianity in terms of a fulfillment of both the Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, such that the "true gnostic" could find the pinnacle of knowledge and the complete actualization of human potential only within the inner embrace of the church. While not dismissing the legitimacy of the simple faith of ordinary Christians, he thus makes his appeal to the intellectual spiritualism of his milieu.

Consequently, as a spiritual guide with a more esoteric understanding of the faith, he will come to take the interpretation of the psalm in a new direction.<sup>21</sup> The import of the passage is unquestionable for him, as he references it once each in the *Protrepticus* (123.1) in the *Paedagogus* (1.26.2) and four times in the *Stromateis* (2.20; 4.23; 6.146; 7.56). The first two evidence definite resonances with both Justin and Irenaeus and reflect a more "common" application of the passage. For Clement, the passage expresses the unique status of Christians as sons of God by grace, through adoption, made in God's image to become God's likeness in righteousness, holiness, and wisdom (alluding to Eph. 4:24). This pertains to all Christians, who by baptism are brought into perfection through knowing the Father, although the fulfillment of their perfection awaits God's timing: "What is yet to come, His will alone has already anticipated."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> BBKL, s.v. "Clemens von Alexandrien," 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>21</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Clement of Alexandria: Christ the Educator*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Simon P. Wood, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 23 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954).

<sup>22</sup> Clement, *Paed.* 1.6.26 (Clement of Alexandria, *Clement of Alexandria: Christ the Educator*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Simon P. Wood, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 23 [New York: Fathers of

The *Stromateis*, on the other hand, deploys Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) within Clement’s paradigm of gnostic ascent. The gnostic Christian becomes a “god” through attaining perfect self-restraint by the Spirit, with Christ as the charioteer of the tamed emotions. For the first time, we find language in the orthodox tradition which suggests leaving the human nature behind: the gnostic rejects “as far as possible” all that is human.<sup>23</sup> This qualification—“as far as possible” (ὡς οἶόν)—affirms both a maximization of human possibility and some ontological limit on the degree to which humanity can be transformed. Thus far book two of the *Stromateis*. Book four relates the deified status (for Clement is not averse to this language) to impassibility, to virtue, but also to peaceful contemplation of God, again “as far as this is possible.” Book six interprets the fourth commandment—to honor father and mother—in terms of honoring God the Father and the “Mother,” that is, knowledge and wisdom revealed in Christ. The “gods” and “sons” thus enjoy a relationship with God through the attainment of spiritual wisdom and knowledge. Finally, book seven turns to the eschatological end of the gnostic “god” to be fully purified in glory, contemplating God in his presence (cf., Matt. 5:8). Clement implies that this end becomes the prerogative of only the few spiritual elite.

Providing an alternative to Gnostic speculation, Clement’s individualistic and esoteric spirituality anticipates later voices in the tradition, albeit minority voices. He boldly envisions sanctification as leading beyond the human condition, even as his limiting phrase “as far as possible” reaffirms humanity’s finite potential.<sup>24</sup> He is also the first to extrapolate the

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the Church, 1954], 26).

<sup>23</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.20.125.5–6. (ANF 2:374). A few generations later Methodius of Olympus will cite Ps. 82:6a (LXX 81:6a) to teach that God grants the title of “gods” (among others) to those who are not fleshly but spiritual (*De sanguisuga* 9.2). He does not elaborate as to why the title is appropriate.

<sup>24</sup> The limiting phrase is first found in Plato’s description of the goal of the wise human being to become god “as far as this is possible.” Plato, *Theaet.* 176b.

significance of the passage into a full-blown speculation of the nature of the glory to come. While in the *Protrepticus* and the *Paedagogus* he depicts even the newly baptized Christian as a “god,” in the *Stromateis* he holds the title out as an incentive for his students to progress in spiritual disciplines and understanding. Pastorally, the first use grounds the believer in the glory of salvation given and the second calls the disciple to persist in reaching toward the ultimate rewards of faith.

### Pseudo-Hippolytus against the Gnostics

Here between Clement and Origen, it seems fair to allot a place to the supposedly Hippolytan text, *In Valentinianos*.<sup>25</sup> With its concern to defend the truth faith, it appears to belong in the early third-century struggle between the “orthodox church” and the “Gnostic heretics.” This text responds to a purported Valentinian position that God had made humanity mortal from the point of creation. It argues that, to be consistent, they must conclude that God also made humanity sinful, since even they acknowledge that death follows sin. The author rejects both the premise and the conclusion. Citations from Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) as well as three passages from the book of Wisdom (1:13, 2:22 and 2:24) support the author’s view that God had originally made humanity with the aim to become “gods,” that is, immortal and incorruptible.<sup>26</sup> Death only entered the world through the devil’s deceit and humanity’s willful sin. The author

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<sup>25</sup> Hippolytus, *In Valentinianos*. This text, originally in Greek, survives only in an Armenian fragment and may have originally belonged to the now fragmentary work of Hippolytus, *De resurrectione et ininruptibilitate*. The biography and dating of Hippolytus (or Hippolyti!) has been notoriously difficult for scholars. Cf., Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 232–37. The dating to the early third century, however, is accurate. The authenticity of this text, affirmed by the editors of GCS, remains uncertain for some, e.g., Marcel Richard, “Les Difficultés d’une Édition des Oeuvres de S. Hippolyte,” ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *Studia Patristica* 12, no. 1 (1975): 69.

<sup>26</sup> Although the biblical citations in this argument are unique to this text, the argument derives from Theophilus of Antioch in the middle of the second century (*Autol.* 2.27), who also teaches that humanity was made to become “gods” through maturing to perfection (*Autol.* 2.24).

argues that the original human being was both mortal and immortal, capable of either life or death. This text identifies the “deity” of Adam as a potentiality residing in his sinlessness, to flower into the consequent immortality. The parallels to Justin and Irenaeus are clear. Ps.-Hippolytus reads Ps. 82:6a (LXX 81:6a) as words appropriately directed to the newly created Adam. The judgment that follows must be understood to result from sin, just as the divine voice in the Psalm decries the injustice of its addressees. Ps.-Hippolytus here only related Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to the narrative of creation and fall and only cites texts from Wisdom; as the exegetical tradition develops, few other Fathers will illustrate such a restricted pattern of intertextuality.<sup>27</sup>

#### Early Pastoral Motives for Citing Psalm 82:6

In this period before Origen (185–253), who will arguably prove to be the most influential exegete in this study, patristic interpretations of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) already manifest discrete trajectories for future Fathers to follow. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement (at least in his earlier writings) can affirm that all Christians may be called “gods” as they receive the gifts of immortality and the restoration of God’s image by God’s grace. Ps.-Hippolytus relates the Psalm to the narrative of Adam and Eve, without any articulated application to the Christian, although his identification of deity with immortality suggests a promised deification in Christ. Clement’s *Stromateis* presents a bolder interpretation, asserting a somewhat “superhuman” god-like status for the gnostic, particularly in glory.

In terms of pastoral care, these first orthodox teachers illustrate concerns typical of the period. Ever since Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century, bishops like

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<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the only other instance in this study of a Father linking Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) only to deuterocanonical texts appears in Athanasius, *Inc.* 4.6.8.

Irenaeus held an office seen by many to embody the unity of the church and they consciously included the correction of false doctrine among their tasks.<sup>28</sup> This defensive task is also clearly embraced by the teachers Justin and Clement, who employed Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) against Jews and Gnostics respectively, understanding Clement’s program of Gnostic Christianity as an effort to provide an attractive and authentic alternative to an illegitimate faith.

Bauer had hypothesized that Christian orthodoxy constructed itself in its opposition to heresy (now aptly named the “Bauer hypothesis”).<sup>29</sup> The second century provides some evidence for this, at least with respect to the use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). Granted, Mosser and Van den Hoek trace the Christian use of the verse to Jewish antecedents.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, most of the first attested Christian uses were called forth by polemical situations against Jews and “heretics.” Evidence in the later third century will add “pagans” to the list of conversation partners in this regard. Certainly, one clearly pastoral concern was to correct misinterpretations of the Scripture which were deemed dangerous to salvation.

Recently, Clemens Scholten has also argued that the audience for the literature against the heretics included the wider society as orthodox Christians, in demonstrating a rejection of aberrant groups, made a bid to establish common ground with the values of their city-states.<sup>31</sup> Scholten suggests that the appeals in defense of the Creator God might have resonated with a

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<sup>28</sup> Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 5; Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Gillian Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, Key Themes in Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Mosser, “Earliest Patristic Interpretations”; Annawies van den Hoek, “I Said, You Are Gods . . . The Significance of Ps. 82 for Some Early Christian Authors,” in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 203–19. A typical early rabbinic interpretation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) placed it at the scene of the reception of the law at Sinai. Receiving the revelation deified the nation, which then lost that glory in the incident of the golden calf. A minority of rabbis related the psalm to the fall of Adam—the standard Christian connection in the second century.

<sup>31</sup> Clemens Scholten, “Die Funktion der Häresienabwehr in der alten Kirche,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 66, no. 3 (2012): 229–68.

certain set of intellectual pagans. In this way, deploying Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in opposition to Marcion and the Gnostics could be a political stratagem, even as it clearly served a missionary purpose.<sup>32</sup>

The most irenic context for Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in this early period appears with Clement. His early works illustrate missional and catechetical instruction with the verse, while his *Stromateis* implicitly exhorts Christians to attain to the heights of virtue and the greatest assimilation to God. Clement shows how the passage bears fruit not simply in argumentation with outsiders but also for the constructive edification of the church, both for those just entering and for those eager to advance to the highest reaches of spirituality.

### **Western Beginnings: Tertullian, Cyprian, and Novatian**

Three early western authors pick up Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6)—Tertullian (155–ca. 220), Cyprian (200/210–258), and Novatian (fl. 250–253). Of these, Tertullian takes the lead, as he does at many points of western theology, in articulating a clarification of central issues which will persist through the centuries. Cyprian, repeating the argument of John 10, illustrates an early Christological deployment of the passage. For his part, Novatian presents readings of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) which carefully observe the context of the passage both within the psalm and within its citation in John 10.

About the turn of the third century, Tertullian arose as a teacher of the church, but one with an independent judgment so that he could express critique of the traditional church and eventually align his sympathies with the Montanists.<sup>33</sup> His own citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6)

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<sup>32</sup> Scholten, “Funktion der Häresienabwehr,” 261.

<sup>33</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Tertullian,” 1996, OCLC.org.

occur in polemical contexts as part of his defense of his faith; his contribution in these cases took the form of a conscious emphasis on the Creator-creature distinction.<sup>34</sup> This pronounced development in Christian theology, arguably a consequence of the second-century conflict with Gnosticism, prevents Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) from being read to mean that Christians become God in the same sense that the uncreated Trinity is God. Tertullian observes that God alone is the unborn, unmade, eternal Creator.<sup>35</sup> Others are “gods” in name only and this, too, comes to them as a gift of grace, not of themselves.<sup>36</sup> Christ, however, is both Son and God in the true sense, so that he is equal to but not identical with the Father. These themes persist through the tradition.

The nature of the early usage of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) has led Mark Nispel to argue that the psalm passage had a place in a hypothesized testimonium list as a proof for the deity of Christ.<sup>37</sup> In the middle of the third century, Bishop Cyprian, who clearly draws on early traditions, especially Tertullian, provides important evidence for this argument. At the same time, Cyprian’s employment of the passage hardly surpasses what any astute reading of the New Testament may have concluded, even without an intervening tradition. As a professional rhetorician turned Christian, he knew how to read texts carefully.<sup>38</sup> In an environment of persecution and schism which required above all, in Cyprian’s view, a strongly unified church,

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<sup>34</sup> This distinction was to have a wide-ranging impact on Christian theology. It stands behind the theological and Christological debates of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, both as an impetus for the controversy and as a key to its solution. For a detailed depiction of the development of the Christian doctrine of creation, see Paul M. Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Kaiser dates the development of the “fully developed creationist tradition” to the first two centuries before Christ. This tradition entails the comprehensibility of the world, the unity of heaven and earth, the relative autonomy of nature, and the ministry of healing and restoration. The Creator-creature distinction, so important for this study, is implicit within its logic. Kaiser, *Creational Theology*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.7.

<sup>36</sup> Tertullian, *Herm.* 5.4.

<sup>37</sup> Mark D. Nispel, “Salvation as Deification,” 289–304.

<sup>38</sup> BBKL, s.v., “Cyprian,” 1990, OCLC.org.

his pastoral interpretation eschews speculation and brings forth the direct meaning of the text. Following the presentation of John 10:34–36, Cyprian explains that Jesus rightly claims the title of the Son of God. He reads the logic as an argument from the lesser to the greater (*a minore ad maius*):<sup>39</sup> “But if they who have been righteous and have obeyed the divine precepts may be called gods, how much more is Christ, the Son of God, God!”<sup>40</sup> He understands the psalm to grant the title of “god” to the obedient righteous, yet clearly sees no ontological transformation in this honor.

Novatian, shortly after his consecration as a presbyter, withdrew to a life of asceticism, during which time he wrote a treatise on the Holy Trinity which was to serve as a decisive work for western theology.<sup>41</sup> With argumentation similar to Cyprian’s, Novatian twice in *De Trinitate* references Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and for the same purpose, to defend the deity of Christ.<sup>42</sup> In both instances he is attentive to the context of the citation in John 10. In the first, he underlines the evidence for Christ’s deity in that he is “from above” rather than “from below,” Creator rather than created, immortal and giving immortality, pre-existent and prior to Abraham his forbearer rather than after him. This thoroughly Johannine reasoning thus rests on dichotomies which differentiate God and humanity. Christ’s gift of immortality, which Novatian identifies with the gift of divinity, distinguishes him as fully God himself.<sup>43</sup> Novatian names the “gods” of John 10

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<sup>39</sup> In the thirteen hermeneutical rules of R. Ishmael, this argument is called Kal va-ḥomer. “Hermeneutics,” Jewish Virtual Library: A Project of AICE, 1998–2020, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hermeneutics>. Scholars debate the relationship between Jewish hermeneutical rules as evidenced later and the logic of the New Testament (not to mention the Church Fathers). Cf., Andreas Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium: Eine Untersuchung zur johanneischen Hermeneutik anhand der Schriftzitate*, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament* 2nd ser., 83 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 182–83.

<sup>40</sup> Cyprian, *Test.* 2.6 (ANF 5:518).

<sup>41</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Novatian,” 1993, OCLC.org.

<sup>42</sup> Novatian, *Trin.* 15 and 20.

<sup>43</sup> “By offering divinity through immortality, he proves himself to be God in his offering divinity, which he

(and Ps. 82, LXX 81) as those to “whom the words (of God) were given” (*ad quos uerba facta sunt*)<sup>44</sup>—the recipients of revelation in a general sense. Christ is greater than these.

Five chapters later, he alludes to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) as he makes additional arguments *a minore ad maius*: Jesus is greater than the angels (who, it is granted, may be called “gods”), greater than the “fallen prince” Satan (himself implicitly given the title “god” in Ps. 82, LXX 81), and greater than Moses (“Pharaoh’s god” per Exod. 7:1). Thus, Christ has more right than they to bear the divine title, because he alone is loved by the Father “beyond measure” (cf., John 3:34). In Novatian we see his full attention set on directing all the potential of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) found in both its Old Testament and New Testament contexts to articulating Christ’s full deity.

These three authors further illustrate apologetic (Tertullian) and catechetical motivations (Cyprian and Novatian). Together they contribute to the exegetical tradition of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) by underscoring the Christological significance of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for defending the deity of Christ.

### **Origen: The Enormous Influence of Creative Applications**

Succeeding Clement as the head of the “catechetical school” of Alexandria, Origen continued the program of reaching out to intellectuals and Gnostics, but in his own key, not in the terms of the eclectic philosophical tapestry represented by the *Stromateis*, but with a bold theological vision. That vision drew the narrative of Scripture back before creation to the story of a primordial spiritual fall, expanded the role of angels and demons, and extrapolated salvation

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would not be able to present unless himself he were God” (*praestando autem diuinitatem per immortalitatem deum se probat diuinitatem porrigendo, quam, nisi deus esset, praestare non posset*). Novatian, *Trin.* 15 (PL 3:913)

<sup>44</sup> Novatian, *Trin.* 15 (PL 3:913).

history to a universal reconciliation of all sentient beings. Speculative as it is, Origen's theology, however, remained centered in Christ as the Savior. As grounding for this bold vision, which functioned as a kind of theodicy in the face of the origin of evil and the presence of injustice in a world created by a good and loving God, Origen read the words of Scriptures as signs pointing to higher spiritual realities. The most famous Christian teacher of his age, Origen's life is divided between the first period in Alexandria and then his continued work centered in Caesarea, though his fame occasionally compelled him to travel more extensively as powerful people sought him out. His personal life exemplified the ascetic discipline which demonstrated the power of his faith in an ultimate union with God and which he sought to impart to his students in his ministry of teaching and preaching.

Summarizing Origen's interpretation and employment of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) proves a challenge. The voluminous material attributed to the great scholar includes no less than 35 references to the passage, five of which, however, are found in works of dubious attribution. His prolific literary output, ever saturated with biblical citations, was bound to repeatedly employ the passage. Furthermore, the bent of his theological mind harbored no qualms about affirming the existence of multiple "gods" and confessing that Christians, too, could become "gods," as long as the necessary qualifications remained in force. This summary will provide an outline of the findings. To present the range of his employment of the psalm, we begin with two sets of observations.

#### Broad Linguistic and Theological Patterns

First, Origen is sensitive to patterns of thought and the nature of language. Most of his relevant exegetical passages evidence a kind of dichotomy of contrasting pairs (e.g., flesh-spirit, life-death, truth-falsehood) which invoke the thematic dichotomies present within the psalm:

human-divine, life-death, justice-injustice.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the appearance of any such binary structure elsewhere in Scripture could lead Origen to connect it with one or more of the dichotomous patterns in Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Such dichotomies are not merely linguistic contrasts; they serve to structure the dramatic narrative of creation-fall-restoration which is central to Origen's proclamation of the Word. Alternatively, in a significant number of instances, Origen turns to the psalm when he happens upon the multivalence of another biblical term.<sup>46</sup> Psalm 82:6 (LXX 81:6) can illustrate such multivalence for the term "G/god," which then illustrates the principle for other terms as well (e.g., "love," and "spirit").<sup>47</sup> The recognition of the multivalence of terms provides Origen a mechanism by which he may both read the text precisely (that is, with ἀκριβεία or "on its own terms") and find within it the meaning necessary for what he understands to be faithful proclamation.<sup>48</sup> As a consequence, Origen attends to both dichotomies and

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<sup>45</sup> Theon's *Progymnasmata*, a popular rhetorical text from the first century, trained children in *sunkrisis*, the art of comparing and contrasting. He notes the importance of such in his preface. Origen appears to have been shaped by the power of such contrasts to clarify and develop a line of thought. Philip Rollinson, *Readings from Classical Rhetoric* (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1990), 255.

<sup>46</sup> I am using the term "multivalence" as expressive of homonymy, which occurs when a word has more than one referent, as the classic grammarians taught ever since Aristotle had defined it. Trigg demonstrates both Origen's regular practice of recognizing homonymy and even his direct citation of Aristotle's definition in *Hom. Jer.* 20.1. Origen describes the principle of homonymy in the *Preface to the Dialogue with Heraclides* and in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. Joseph Trigg, *Origen, The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 1998), Ebscohost. The recognition of homonymy will prove to be a standard move in the interpretation of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) among orthodox interpreters.

<sup>47</sup> Irenaeus was the first to formally attempt to define the different senses of "god" relevant to Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3. 6.1.

<sup>48</sup> Given that Ps. 82 (LXX 81) addresses the sanctified as "sons of the Most High," it is interesting that Origen also found multivalent meaning in the "child/son of X" formulas in the Scriptures. In this he appears to have followed the Valentinian Gnostic, Heracleon (*fl.* 175), who delineated the potential meaning as indicative of (1) physical descent (e.g., "children of Abraham"), (2) the resolve to follow another's will (e.g., "children of the devil"), or (3) the merit to attain to a state of affairs (e.g., "son of destruction"). Didymus will also pick up this insight (with his own modifications), but no patristic author applies it directly to their interpretation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Byard Bennett, "The Origin of Evil: Didymus the Blind's *Contra Manichaeos* and Its Debt to Origen's Theology and Exegesis" (Ph.D. diss., Toronto, University of St. Michael's College, 1997), 132, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

multivalences in the patterns of thought and language.<sup>49</sup>

Second, when referencing the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) Origen’s comments congregate into three theological motifs: the confession of God as an absolutely unique being; the transformation of human beings, even to the point of surpassing their own humanity;<sup>50</sup> and the fall of the divine “sons” so that they must now die like human beings. Other minor themes also emerge, but these may serve as the larger organizing patterns.

Both ontological and kerygmatic commitments guide Origen’s reading. Ontologically, God alone—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—possesses divine attributes in himself, such as having no beginning or end, possessing divine power, the divine nature, as well as self-sufficiency, invisibility, incorporeality, and immutability.<sup>51</sup> He alone does divine works, such as creating the world.<sup>52</sup> He alone is to be worshipped.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the human creature, through the grace manifest in Christ, may come to participate in certain divine attributes. He identifies these as follows: accomplishing supernaturally good works (e.g., loving those who hate them or

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<sup>49</sup> Origen also models the continuing influence of the *gezerah shava*, the Jewish hermeneutical method by which a word (or words) in one passage justifies an intertextual invocation of another passage with the same word or words. “Hermeneutics,” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hermeneutics>. Early rabbis developed strict controls against the abuse of such intertextual associations; Christian practice was governed merely by the rule of faith.

<sup>50</sup> Recall this possibility was first explored by Clement in *Strom.* 2.20.

<sup>51</sup> Origen, *Hom. Ex.* 6.5. For self-sufficiency, see also the homily 1 on Psalm 16 (LXX 15). Origen, *Origenes XIII: Die neuen Psalmenhomilien*, ed. Lorenzo Perrone et al., GCS, 2nd ser., vol. 19 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015). Pamphilus’s citation of an otherwise lost section of book five of Origen’s *Comm. Jo.* (preserved in a translation by Rufinus) contrasts the natural divine Sonship of Christ with the adopted sonship of believers. The text specifically contrasts the “true God” and “true Son” from the gods and sons of Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Rufinus, *Apol. Orig.* 93.

<sup>52</sup> Origen, *Hom. Ex.* 6.5.

<sup>53</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 8.3. Later in the tradition, Gregory of Nazianzus (330–389/390) invites the baptized to taunt Satan with the mocking suggestion that Satan ought to worship them rather than they him, since baptism has so united them with Christ. *Or.* 40.10. The intent is to shame Satan into fleeing, not attain actual obeisance from him. Even here, Gregory retains the distinction between God and those who are his image as between Christ the Light and those he enlightens. For an argument that Gregory seriously maintains that Satan should worship the believer, see Gabrielle Thomas, *The Image of God in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 143–52. Gregory, however, envisions the satisfactory outcome of such an encounter as the departure of Satan, not his actual compliance, nor does Gregory develop any further argumentation as to why he seriously believes Satan owes the believer such worship.

expressing joy in times of loss);<sup>54</sup> standing in the truth;<sup>55</sup> becoming a helper of the poor and lowly;<sup>56</sup> ruling as lord over everything;<sup>57</sup> possessing superhuman purity of character<sup>58</sup> (sinlessness,<sup>59</sup> virtue, and perfection);<sup>60</sup> participating in divine blessedness;<sup>61</sup> and receiving a heavenly nature<sup>62</sup>—which is spiritual,<sup>63</sup> beautiful,<sup>64</sup> and includes the immortality of the soul and the transformation of the body beyond flesh and blood so as to be received into the glory of heaven.<sup>65</sup> The creature reaches this state only by God’s grace. As a gift from God this divine state may be lost through a sinful response which amounts to a rejection of the gift. In his pastoral care, Origen does not hesitate to exhort his hearers to retain that which God has given them in Christ and to strive to attain to divinity.<sup>66</sup>

### Intertextuality

Due to Origen’s prolific corpus and his frequent citation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), one is not surprised that he connects the psalm to a variety of other Bible passages. Looking only at this data of repeated intertextual citations, he is the first to take recourse to Ps. 95:5 (“All the gods of

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<sup>54</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 16.29.

<sup>55</sup> Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 20.242.

<sup>56</sup> Origen, *1 hom. Ps. 82* (LXX 81; GCS 19, *Origenes XIII*, 517).

<sup>57</sup> Rufinus, *Orig. comm. Rom.* 7.2. Here Origen follows Gal. 4:1 quite precisely: “He is the owner (κύριος) of everything.”

<sup>58</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 4.31.

<sup>59</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 2:521.

<sup>60</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 4.29.

<sup>61</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 8.6.

<sup>62</sup> Origen, *Hom. Ez.* 1.9.

<sup>63</sup> Rufinus, *Orig. hom. Lev.* 9.11.

<sup>64</sup> Rufinus, *Orig. hom. Exod.* 6.5.

<sup>65</sup> Cf., Origen, *Hom. 1 Psalm 82 (LXX 81)*.1 and *Hom. 7 Ps. 67.5*. Elsewhere, Origen explains that the soul is only immortal by partaking of life in God (Origen, *Hom. 9 Lev.* 11).

<sup>66</sup> As an example, see the conclusion of *Hom. 1 Ps. 82 (LXX 81)*.

the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens”) and 1 Cor. 8:5–6 (“For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist,” ESV) and he does so in his early works. This suggests that he first thought it important to establish the linguistic possibility of saying there are many gods and to distinguish them from the true God. Next, by way of John 10:35, Origen normalizes the assertion that some of those who are called “gods” could be identified with Christians, those “to whom the Word of God came” (John 10:35, ESV). This “coming of the Word of God” he equates with the coming of Christ, the Word, to be united with the soul of the believer.<sup>67</sup> While he continues to make these points, his later works repeatedly add other verses to clarify that the likeness to God is a likeness to angels

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<sup>67</sup> In John 10:36 the ambiguity of the antecedent of the masculine relative pronoun, ὃν, has allowed interpreters and translators to render the referent of “the one whom the Father sent” as either the Word (ὁ Λόγος, who is Christ) or simply as Christ’s self-referent. Jerome’s Vulgate retains the ambiguity since it renders the masculine λόγος in verse 35 with the masculine *sermo*. A few of the Old Latin manuscripts instead choose the neuter *verbum* for λόγος and, with the masculine *quem* as the relative pronoun, thus remove the question in favor of Christ and not the Word which has been sanctified and sent by the Father. “Vetus Latina Iohannes Synopsis,” Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing, <http://www.iohannes.com/vetuslatina/edition/index.html>. In his German translation of the verses as they appear in Eusebius, Gers-Uphaus resolves the ambiguity in favor of the coming Word: “Wenn er jene Götter nannte, an die das Wort Gottes ergangen ist—auch nicht kann die Schrift (auf-)gelöst werden—, (über) das [sc. das Wort; CGU], das der Vater geheiligt und in die Welt gesandt hat, sagt ihr, dass es lästere, weil ich sagte: Sohn Gottes bin ich.” Gers-Uphaus, *Sterbliche Götter—Göttliche Menschen*, Kindle Edition. Luther, for his part, removed the ambiguity in favor of Christ alone by using the neuter, *das Wort*, and the masculine relative phrase, “zu dem, den” (“to him whom” the Father sanctified). Of course, via John 1, any interpreter might identify Christ with the coming and deifying word. The question is whether that identification appears explicitly in John 10:35–36. The ambiguity helps explain why so many Fathers could easily read Christ as the “coming Word.”

Considering NT usage broadly, it is not implausible to consider ὁ λόγος to be the antecedent of ὃν, nor is it necessary. Cf., especially pages 234–45 in James L. Boyer, “Relative Clauses in the Greek New Testament: A Statistical Study,” *Grace Theological Journal* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1988): 233–56. However, in John 1–10, wherever the antecedent precedes the relative pronoun, it typically does so within six words (counting inclusively), twice in seven. This case would be an outlier, with the antecedent appearing eleven words before the relative pronoun. Also, the relative pronoun would lie within a separate clause, the protasis of the conditional. Finally, there occur three preceding instances (John 3:34, 5:38, and 6:29) with parallel content identifying Christ as “he whom God sent”—all without the antecedent (contrast, however, John 14:26 regarding the Holy Spirit). In short, Johannine usage inclines toward reading this as relative pronoun without an antecedent rather than concluding that it has direct reference to ὁ λόγος.

(cf., Matt. 22:30), that it will entail degrees of difference in resurrection (cf., 1 Cor. 15:41–42) and likeness to Christ at his appearing (cf., 1 John 3:2). Also, he explains that the nature of being “merely human” is to walk according to the flesh (cf., Rom. 8:13) and to live in jealousy and strife (cf., 1 Cor. 3:3).<sup>68</sup> Some Fathers will follow Origen in referencing Ps. 96:5 (LXX 95:5) (and similar Psalm passages), Matt. 22:30, and 1 Cor. 3:3. Moreover, 1 Cor. 8:5–6 with Paul’s acknowledgement of “many gods,” gets six citations from Origen and no less than 19 additional citations from the subsequent tradition, making it a crucial pairing for understanding the psalm. When citing Psalm 82 (LXX 81), Origen will often reference one or two other biblical texts, but occasionally—as in his homily on Psalm 77 (LXX 76)<sup>69</sup>—he gathers an array of biblical texts into a comprehensive multi-dimensional intertextual application of our verse from Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Throughout his work, Origen consistently presents deification as entailing both union with God and the development of a virtuous character in conformity with the holiness of God.

### Pastoral Care

Multiple aspects of Origen’s use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) manifest his pastoral concern for his students and hearers. He fully internalized the charge to interpret the Scriptures for their spiritual edification. Although he can speak of “gods,” whether angelic or transformed humans, he observes the church’s rule of faith by safeguarding the unique divinity of the one true Creator God through identifying distinctive characteristics of God which cannot be predicated of creatures. Furthermore, his understanding of the *kerygma*, the church’s central message of salvation in Christ, guides his reading and application of the text. Psalm 82 (LXX 81) reflects the

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<sup>68</sup> This set of intertextual connections is new with Origen. One must grant, however, that in *Strom.* 2, 20, Clement did cite Rom. 8:9 rather than Rom. 8:13 to illustrate the flesh-spirit dichotomy; there Clement also cited 1 Cor. 15:50 (rather than Origen’s 1 Cor. 15:41–42) to argue for the necessary transformation beyond “flesh and blood” to inherit the kingdom of God.

<sup>69</sup> Origen, *Hom. Ps.* 15.5 on Ps. 77 (LXX 76).

full drama of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. In identifying Christ as the Word whose coming deifies the recipients, he deepens the Christological and soteriological significance of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and binds it all the more closely to John 10:34–35. In fact, the wide-ranging connections he made between Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and other passages of Scripture created an intertextual network which would serve the church’s pastoral task through the rest of the patristic period, as will be detailed in the conclusion of this work.

Origen also revealed the larger pastoral potential of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) by deploying it with new kinds of perlocutionary force. As described by John Searle in 1969, perlocutionary force indicates the intended effect of the message on the recipient, such as to comfort or to frighten, to warn or to instruct.<sup>70</sup> Most of the orthodox authors thus far employed Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for correction and instruction as they employed it in the rejection of heresy or their teaching about the nature of God and his Christ. Perhaps a subtle missiological purpose appeared in anti-heretical texts intended to assure the broader society of the traditional character of Christian values. The unorthodox Naassenes arguably used the verse not only to explain the Gnostic ascent to God but to stimulate it. Clement more clearly deployed the verse for such encouragement in the *Stromateis*. Origen adds a melody in a minor key, as he not only preached it as an exhortation but also as a call to repentance. The call to become gods reveals the sinfulness of humanity and the need to leave behind its inherent vices.<sup>71</sup> The death “like a human” and the fall “like a leader” in Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) depict the contemporary human condition and the need for restoration.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). On this topic, Searle organized the thought of John L. Austin. Cf., John L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed., The William James Lectures Series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

<sup>71</sup> For example, “all human beings are liars.” Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 20.27.242.

<sup>72</sup> E.g., Origen, *Hom. Ps. 7* on Ps. 68 (LXX 67) 5.43.

The tenor of the conversations of a catechetical school for conversion and spiritual growth which one begins to hear in Clement comes to full sound in Origen. Thus, he is the first to apply the text to the life of prayer, urging his readers not to pray “like human beings” with corrupt desires but in a way that pleases God, that is, with love for God.<sup>73</sup> Since those who “trust in human beings” are cursed, Origen uses Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to say that those who trust in Christ become gods.<sup>74</sup> In an interpretation of Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees as “whitewashed tombs,” Origen explains that hypocrites may appear righteous “before human beings,” but they cannot deceive those whom the Scriptures call “gods”;<sup>75</sup> he thus indicates how spiritual people have the power to discern hearts. This theoretical affirmation enters deeply into the monastic practice of discernment as fundamental to spiritual care.<sup>76</sup> For Origen, Psalm 82 (LXX 81) has utility not only in teaching but in depicting the full response and promise of the Christian life.

Finally, Origen takes advantage of the evangelistic potential of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). In his apologetic work, *Contra Celsum*, the passage appears four times: to celebrate the glory of humanity which may become like God through virtue and reason, to honor the ancient Jewish people for their super-human purity of character, to differentiate those who are called gods from the one true God, and to distinguish Christians by their higher calling to civic duties in their heavenly city.<sup>77</sup> This is the first Christian reference to the passage in conversation with paganism. It displays an accommodation to pagan polytheistic or, perhaps better, henotheistic language, as many intellectuals had come to accept the existence of a single Most High God, under whom

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<sup>73</sup> Origen, *Or.* 19.3; 2<sup>nd</sup> *hom. Ps.* 38 (LXX 37) in Michael Heintz, “The Pedagogy of the Soul: Origen’s Homilies on the Psalms” (PhD diss., Notre Dame, 2008), 253–54, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

<sup>74</sup> Origen, *Hom. Jer.* 15.6

<sup>75</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 24.

<sup>76</sup> Cf., Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 8–9.

<sup>77</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 4.29, 4.31, 8.3, 8.74.

lesser divinities existed. Origen's strategy, nevertheless, guides his reader toward a Christian monotheistic worldview and the recognition of God's saving work through Israel and in Christ. What may have been implicit in previous apologetic works becomes explicit here: that salvation in Christ offers the pagan world the realization of their most audacious hopes—to become “gods.”

### **Conclusion**

The sweep of the first three centuries of Christianity shows Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) first referenced by unorthodox exegetes, Marcion and the Naassenes. Early usage among the church fathers typically reads the passage in connection to the creation and fall of Adam and Eve (Justin, Irenaeus, Ps.-Hippolytus), but increasingly for the purpose of articulating the nature of the salvation which Christians receive from Christ. They become sons, adopted by grace, remade into the likeness of God. The original apologetic usages yield to a focus on Christian edification when Clement elaborates on the spiritual potential of union with God which Irenaeus had broached. Western authors (Tertullian, Cyprian, Novatian) primarily employed the passage to teach the unique deity of Christ as God over against any “gods.” It is Origen, however, who most thoroughly develops the spiritual interpretation of the Psalm, for the edification of the church and even for her mission to non-believers. His enormous influence will reverberate through the rest of the tradition.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BATTLE LINES: PSALM 82:6 AMID CONTROVERSIES IN A CONVERTING EMPIRE

The fourth-century intra-Christian battle over the divinity of the Son took place in a cultural context in which pagan and Christian thought were potentially at the verge of some sort of concord, at least in cosmology. The growing appeal of “henotheism” or a “soft monotheism” (which acknowledged gods under a Most High God) would allow for an acceptance of Christianity as a version of this paradigm.<sup>1</sup> Already, Christians like Origen could call angels and glorified Christians “gods,” with demons recognized as heavenly rulers now fallen from favor. A danger in this convergence, however, lurked in the potential demotion of the Son to simply another subordinated “god.” With the conversion of Constantine and the influx of converts into the church, the assimilation of Christianity to this paradigm of “soft monotheism” would be instinctive among many of the new Christians, leading to a pastoral challenge to clearly define the “gods” and differentiate the Sonship of Christ. In addition, MacMullen argues that the strengths of polytheism, with its sense of fellowship with divine beings and its full embrace of human experience in festivals and the arts, meant that even in the Constantinian period full conversion to Christianity did not appeal to everyone; many worshippers would welcome compromise positions.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Arian controversy arose in a milieu with multiple perspectives about God and the “gods” afoot. We begin, however, with an “unorthodox” unitarian text written in full repudiation of “soft monotheism.” It provides a valuable contrast to the Great Church by illustrating how an anti-Nicene position would approach Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and its budding

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<sup>1</sup> Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, 91.

<sup>2</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1997), 152, Ebscohost.

exegetical tradition.

### **The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies***

The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (ca. 300–320) present their apologetics in the form of a polemical novel. The text emerged from a community which aligned its unitarian understanding of Christianity with Judaism in opposition to pagan polytheism and even against those who would confess Trinity and the deity of Christ.<sup>3</sup> The scene which involves Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and the broader question of the identity of the “gods” in Scripture narrates one of several debates between the Apostle Peter and the arch-heretic Simon Magus.<sup>4</sup> It begins with Simon arguing that the Scriptures themselves acknowledge the existence of other “gods,” a pagan strategy of using Scripture against strict monotheism which was gaining currency when the text was published.

#### Intertextual Novelities

This work also breaks new ground for intertextuality, being the first text to connect Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), Ps. 86:8 (LXX 85:8), and Jer. 10:11. Subsequently, various church fathers will make these same connections. Largely, however, its intertextual pairings are idiosyncratic, showing a greater predilection for the Hexateuch, Deuteronomy in particular, than the Great Church tradition would. Its uniqueness stems from its development from a long-surviving version of Jewish Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Heresiology and the (Jewish-)Christian Novel: Narrativized Polemics in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies,” in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holgar M. Zellentin, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 279, 298.

<sup>4</sup> *Clem. hom.* 16.6–19.

<sup>5</sup> The *Pseudo-Clementine* works are based on a Basic Writing from about 220, per F. Stanley Jones. Klauck adds that some material may stem from the second century, though there is little evidence to support this. Scholars favor the provenance of Syria with its long-standing community of Jewish Christians. F. Stanley Jones, *Pseudoclementina Elchasaiticaque inter Judaeochristiana*, ed. M. Francie Kisko, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 203 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 33; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction*, trans.

Of particular importance is the exegetical shift regarding Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), “You shall not revile the gods,” the verse the church fathers most frequently pair with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6).<sup>6</sup> The *Homilies* together with their sister text, the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (written perhaps a decade later around 325 as a separate reworking of an early version), stand at an inflection point in the interpretation of the passage. Previously, Origen, the first to cite Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), could take the passage literally as a prohibition against abusing the pagan deities.<sup>7</sup> Porphyry, too, would invoke it to assert that Christians should recognize and honor pagan gods.<sup>8</sup> Thus, at the beginning of the fourth century, when the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* have the heretic Simon argue for polytheism from the passage, this fictitious character represents a high century-old tradition of Christian-pagan conversation about the text.<sup>9</sup>

A shift soon takes place, however. The *Recognitions* specify that Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) refers to the “princes of the nations,” meaning earthly rulers.<sup>10</sup> Next, Eusebius and the pseudo-Athanasian *Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos* identify the “gods” of Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27)

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Brian McNeil (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 200.

<sup>6</sup> This passage is at Exod. 22:27 in the Hebrew and LXX, but 22:28 in the Vulgate and the English.

<sup>7</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 8.38, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Porphyry, *Christ.* Frag 78.

<sup>9</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.8. Origen’s engagement with Celsus and Porphyry’s counter-critique involving this text help to substantiate our earlier claim that the late third century/early fourth century witnessed a potential convergence between Christianity and paganism in terms of “soft monotheism” with God reigning over lesser gods. It appears that some pagan intellectuals like Porphyry were willing to read the Christian Scriptures in order to offer their own interpretations and evaluations. Cf., Porphyry’s critique of Christian interpretation, written between 270 and 303 CE (Porphyry, *Christ.*) and, a few generations later, Victorinus’s pre-conversion reading of Scripture in the 250’s (Augustine, *Conf.* 8.2.4) and, yet later, Augustine’s appeal to pagans to purchase the text in the marketplace and read it, even if only to mock it (Augustine, *Sermo* 198.20 [Dobleau 26]).

<sup>10</sup> Rufinus, *Clem. Recogn.* 2.42 (ANF 8:172). This clarification is made in both the Latin and the Syriac translations, which suggests that the explanation is found in the original Greek of the *Recognitions*, written about 325. Jones, *Pseudoclementina Elchasaiticaque inter Judaeochristiana*, 41. For the dating and the need to use both the Latin and the Syriac to interpolate the original Greek text, see Jones, 300, as well as Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, 196.

as human beings.<sup>11</sup> With the aid of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), this becomes the predominant interpretation of this Exodus verse by far.<sup>12</sup> Since these works of Origen, Porphyry, and Ps.-Clement had been widely read,<sup>13</sup> we may take the subsequent tradition to imply a tacit rejection of taking the “gods” here in any literal sense. The reaction, which identified the “gods” rather as human beings in general and often judges and rulers in particular, functioned to counter the propagandist interpretation popular among pagan critics of Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Catechists would naturally encounter these all too plausible compromises among the new converts streaming into the church in the fourth century, who would instinctively understand the “gods” in Scripture to be gods in a literal sense.<sup>15</sup> Such a polytheistic reading even cohered with the roots of the imagery of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in Canaanite mythology, with its ranked gods of the divine council.<sup>16</sup> Reading “gods” as “human beings” demythologized the text and safeguarded the clearer monotheism underwritten by the Creator-creature distinction. (I use the term “demythologize” to depict any interpretation which intentionally resists and rejects the polytheism suggested by the resonance

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<sup>11</sup> Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:433, 51), Ps.-Athanasius, *Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos* (PG 28:1295, 5).

<sup>12</sup> In different contexts, Cyril illustrates how an interpreter can, even after this period, maintain both the referent to human priests and pagan gods. He basically copies Origen’s interpretation in *Comm. Jo.* on 19:7 (Maxwell, 2:336).

<sup>13</sup> Reed tracks the quick translation of the text into several ancient languages. Reed, “Heresiology and the (Jewish-)Christian Novel,” 277. Jones observes that Eusebius appears to refer to the *Homilies* in *Hist. eccl.* 3.38.5. Jones, *Pseudoclementina Elchasaïticaque inter Judaeochristiana*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Origen, in the complexity of his thought, can also take this same “demythologizing” strategy against the pagan Celsus when Origen argues that the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) were the virtuous judges of Israel. Origen, *Cels.* 4.31.

<sup>15</sup> Evans describes the pastoral role of helping the hearers and catechumens work through the adjustments required in the transition from paganism to Christianity. Gillian R. Evans, “The Fathers and the Early Councils,” in *A History of Pastoral Care*, ed. Gillian R. Evans (London: Cassell, 2000), 62.

<sup>16</sup> Bauckham cites John Sawyer in recognizing that the Hebrew Bible contains three categories of texts: those that are explicitly monotheistic, those that may be read so under the influence of the first set, and those that are embarrassingly polytheistic. Of this later group, Psalm 82 (LXX 81) has been named the “most polytheistic” in the Scriptures, though Bauckham notes that the psalm itself can subvert such a reading. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 86, 119.

of Old Testament passages with the religions of its Ancient Near Eastern milieu in favor of reinterpreting the “gods” as a reference to human beings.) Given both the popularity of the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature and the frequency with which church fathers would link Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), we see how this reinterpretation in the *Recognitions* functioned to open the way for the subsequent tradition.

The *Homilies* also endeavored a rewriting of 1 Cor. 8:5, another important pairing for patristic understanding of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). Without referencing Psalm 82 (LXX 81) directly, the *Homilies* list various traditional identifications for the “gods” of Scripture—angels (e.g., appearing in the burning bush and wrestling with Jacob), the one born as “Emmanuel,” Moses (the “god to Pharaoh,” with the clarification “though in reality he was a man”), and the idols of the Gentiles.<sup>17</sup> The author then apparently alludes to 1 Cor. 8:5, the Pauline passage which the church fathers so frequently cited at this point in such an explanation. The two passages are printed here for easy comparison, with a solid line marking identical words and a dotted line signifying similar concepts.

Hom. 16.14, 3

ἡμῖν δὲ εἷς θεός, εἷς ὁ τὰς κτίσεις  
 πεποικῶς καὶ διακοσμήσας τὰ πάντα, οὗ  
 καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς υἱός, ᾧ πειθόμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν  
 γραφῶν τὰ ψευδῆ ἐπιγινώσκομεν.  
 But for us [there is] one God, the one Creator  
 who made the creatures and ordered the universe,  
 whose son is the Christ. By obeying him, we  
 come to recognize the false statements from the

1 Cor. 8:6

ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα  
 καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς  
 Χριστός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.  
 But for us [there is] one God, the Father, from  
 whom the universe [exists] and we in him, and  
 one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the universe  
 [exists] and we by him

<sup>17</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.14 (ANF 8:561).

Scriptures.

Both begin with the affirmation of monotheism “for us,” but *Hom.* 16 then moves directly to vocables which emphasize the Creator-creature distinction (“Creator” and “creatures” rather than the more ambiguous Pauline “from whom” and “in him”). Both then turn to Christ, whom the *Homilies* identify merely as God’s son but whom Paul relates to the divine acts of the generation of the universe and of the people of God. 1 Corinthians 8 also grants the cardinal “one” and the title “Lord” to “Jesus Christ,” effectively merging his identity with that of the one Lord God revealed in the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> The *Clementina* elsewhere reveal the preference to identify Christ only as God’s true prophet<sup>19</sup> and here place him grammatically in a subordinated rather than a coordinated clause. Finally, *Hom.* 16.14, 3 draws the epistemological conclusion about obedience to God (or Christ) yielding a proper discernment of the false passages of Scripture. In contrast, the conclusion for Paul focuses on the establishment of the people of God through Christ.

In short, while both passages move from the personal commitment to monotheism, to identifying God as the Creator of the universe, to honoring Christ, to drawing some conclusion of personal or existential significance for the believers, the *Homilies* clearly subordinate Christ to God at every point and close with an exegetical strategy completely foreign to Paul. Whereas Paul’s language is open to a recognition of Christ as God along with “God the Father” and to the possible union of the believer “in” God and “through” Christ, Ps.-Clement offers no role for Christ as Creator and no place for him alongside “God,” an absolute designation and not a

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<sup>18</sup> Bauckham comes to the same conclusion—Paul is including Jesus within the identity of God by reformulated the Shema and attributing to Jesus an instrumental cause in creation. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 26–29. It is no wonder that the author of the *Homilies* targeted this text of early high Christology for revision.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., *Clem. Hom.* 1.19.1, 1.19.8., 2.5.3.

relational title like “Father.” It concludes with the believer’s obedience and thereby a proper discernment of the truth of the Scriptures. Scholars have long observed the hostility which the Ps.-Clementine literature evidences toward Paul.<sup>20</sup> This passage, understood as a correction of 1 Cor. 8:6, bears that out.

### Rejecting Multivalence

Some passages in *Hom.* 16 reflect fourth-century theological debates and can be understood to be interpolations from mid-century.<sup>21</sup> The tell-tale polemical arguments appear in chapters 15 through 18, where Peter “cannot affirm” that he who comes from God is God because Christ never explicitly revealed it.<sup>22</sup> He rejects any comparison between “what is begotten” and “that which is unbegotten” (and identifies the latter with the Father),<sup>23</sup> and he defines God as “unbounded” (ἄπειρος) and therefore necessarily singular.<sup>24</sup> The argument opposes the church fathers’ efforts to affirm the true deity of Christ through acknowledging his natural Sonship. Of particular import for our purposes, in this section the author explicitly rejects any propriety of employing a divine title (specifically the title “unbegotten”) homonymously: “He who is not the same in all respects as someone cannot have all the same appellations applied to him as that person.”<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, there is no sharing of divine attributes, for “we call God him whose characteristic is not able to attach to (belong to/be added to) another.”<sup>26</sup> As the debate

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<sup>20</sup> Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, 227.

<sup>21</sup> Moreschini and Norelli, *Greek and Latin Literature*, 2:226.

<sup>22</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.15 (ANF 8:561).

<sup>23</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.16 (ANF 8:561).

<sup>24</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.17 (ANF 8:562); GCS 42, *Hom.* 16.17, 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.16 (ANF 8:562).

<sup>26</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.17. ἡμεῖς θεὸν λέγομεν, οὗ ἔστιν ἴδιον τὸ ἄλλω προσεῖναι μὴ δυνάμενον. GCS 42.

advances in chapter 18, Peter elaborates on the tight relationship between the *nomen* “God” and “the ineffable name” such that giving the name “God” to another entails the ascription of God’s unique ineffable name as well.<sup>27</sup> This is the clear rejection of any homonymous meaning of “G/god.” Interestingly, with a possible allusion to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), the author further distinguishes God the Father as “the Most High” (ὕψιστος) with everything else subject to him.<sup>28</sup> If this is indeed a reaction to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and its accompanying exegetical tradition, we may read it as the one affirmative point the author deems he can legitimately make from the text. For the author of the *Clementina*, calling human beings “gods” only has a place in the history and practice of idolatry.<sup>29</sup>

In sum, the Pseudo-Clementine *Hom.* 16, like the Marcionite position and the Naassene passage from the second century, serves as a useful foil for the exegesis and the conclusions of the church fathers. For this author, the rejection of homonymy (or multivalent use of the title “G/god”) corresponds to a philosophical rejection of the sharing of attributes between dichotomous natures.<sup>30</sup> At this point among Christian faith communities, the intertextual nexus of verses around Psalm 82 (LXX 81) has developed considerably and the Clementine text both reflects and contributes to the conversation represented thereby. Countering the prevailing position, it asserts that no human beings may rightly be called “gods,” even if the Scriptures had at times done so. It focuses on unique attributes of God which are simply exclusive to him: worshipped (*Hom.* 16:7), judging (*Hom.* 16:7), creating (*Hom.* 16:8), unbegotten (*Hom.* 16:15),

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<sup>27</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.18.

<sup>28</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.17 (GCS, Rehm 17, 2).

<sup>29</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 9:4–8.

<sup>30</sup> For more on Ps.-Clement’s rejection of allegory and its construction of an alternate way of reading the Scriptures, see D. H. Carlson, *Jewish-Christian Interpretation of the Pentateuch in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 13–50.

unbounded (*Hom.* 16:17), and most high (*Hom.* 16:17). When consideration of the gift of immortality appears in conjunction with reference to the seal imparted with the image of God,<sup>31</sup> there is no consideration that this could grant humans the title of “gods.”

The *Homilies* are quite unique in this aspect. Even its slightly younger sister document, the *Recognitions*, includes a chapter which specifically allows a homonymous use of the name of God.<sup>32</sup> “The name of God is applied in three ways.”<sup>33</sup> The two extant versions of *Recognitions* differ in defining these. Rufinus’s Latin lists he who “is truly God,” God’s servants, and God’s emissaries (e.g., angels);<sup>34</sup> the Syriac, he who “truly is” God, a being ruling by his authority, and a being from him (again, angels serve as an example).<sup>35</sup> Both versions are in agreement in providing the following examples of those who those who might be called gods: angels who rule over the nations, holy men who are “gods to the wicked” (e.g., Moses and judges), and the leaders of the nations. Clearly the functions are the focus for the application of the title. There is no discussion of surpassing human nature or intimate union with God or even adoption as God’s child. Nor does immortality relate to the title. However, like many Fathers, this author identifies activities and characteristics which differentiate the true God from the gods who function under him and by his charge.

Before leaving these texts, we must make one further note with respect to their theory of syzygies (here meaning oppositional pairings) which appears to correlate to the first author’s

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<sup>31</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 6.10.

<sup>32</sup> Scholarship has not settled on a solution for the precise relationship between the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*, although common dependence on a “common basic document” is affirmed. Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, 197.

<sup>33</sup> Rufinus, *Clem. Recogn.* 2.42 (ANF 8:172).

<sup>34</sup> Rufinus, *Clem. Recogn.* 2.42 (ANF 8:172).

<sup>35</sup> *Clem. Recogn.* 2.42 (Joseph Glen Gebhardt, *The Syriac Clementine Recognitions and Homilies: The First Complete Translation of the Text* [Nashville: Grave Distractions, 2014], 68).

rejection of homonymy. The author of the *Homilies* explains that the one Creator God, both in creation and in the history of revelation, often joins pairs and opposites. In revelation, this typically manifests itself in opposites as a false teacher appears before a true one, in order to test the faith and teach discernment.<sup>36</sup> The dualistic system of error and then truth functions both epistemologically and soteriologically.<sup>37</sup> It means, then, that the dichotomous contrasts which church fathers might posit *between God and humanity* (juxtaposing life and death, truth and falsehood, righteousness and sin) occur rather *within history* and *within creation* for the author of the *Homilies*. The one unitarian God stands *above* the dualisms as their Creator rather than representing one side of each polarity. Human beings therefore do not become righteous like the singularly righteous God (and thus become like him and perhaps gain the name of “god”); rather, they are called to join the righteous assembly in the common recognition of and obedience to the one true God. This emphasis on a radical monotheism, expressed in this popular novel, likely reacts to more than the fading ideas of Gnosticism or the remnants of Marcionism. The final fourth-century form of the *Homilies* also expresses a reaction to the increasingly clear Trinitarian articulations of the Nicene camp, as well as a defense against what had become an emerging pagan argument (e.g., Porphyry) for the recognition of multiple gods on the basis of the Scriptural text itself. The “heretical” Simon thus wears both hats—one of the pagan polytheist and the other of the Nicene Trinitarian. In this unitarian apologetic context, Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) only appears in the mouth of the heretic who does not rightly confess the unity of God and cannot properly read the univocal terms of the Scriptures.

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<sup>36</sup> Ps.-Clement, *Clem. Hom.* 2.15 and 2.33. Cf., Reed, *Heresiology and the (Jewish-)Christian Novel*, 284–85.

<sup>37</sup> Reed, *Heresiology and the (Jewish-)Christian Novel*, 285.

## Early Pro-Nicene Writers

Moving into the fourth century, we begin what is known as the “Golden Age” of the church fathers. The names we meet are mostly those of bishops, whose theological and pastoral leadership took place in a context of the new Constantinian relationship between church and state and the new debate over the nature of Christ’s divinity. Many felt the dual charges to faithfully lead their flock and to contribute to the peace and unity of the church by promoting a biblical resolution of the question at hand (even if the immediate methods were anything but irenic).

In the first generation of these fourth-century writers and preachers, Athanasius (ca. 295–373) famously took up the life-long task to defend and promote the Nicene formula, which Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339/340) had signed but with a deep suspicion of anything which might reflect the heresy of Marcellus.<sup>38</sup> He would quickly come to oppose Athanasius; his *De ecclesiastica theologia*, which we shall soon cite, reflected his distinct emphasis on the Son as the hypostasis who reveals the Father and receives his divinity from him.<sup>39</sup> Hilary of Poitiers (*fl.* 350–368), on the other hand, joined Athanasius and became the chief western polemicist for the pro-Nicene position.<sup>40</sup> Phoebadius (d. post 392) defended Nicaea at various councils, including the one held at Ariminum in 359; his citation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) occurs in his yet surviving treatise against the Arians.<sup>41</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem (*fl.* 348–386) would be exiled three times for his support of Nicaea, and Ambrose (ca. 340–397) continued to fight for orthodoxy even when imperial troops were brought into the fray. Gregory of Elvira (d. post 391), a follower of the

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher A. Beeley, “Eusebius’ *Contra Marcellum*: Anti-Modalist Doctrine and Orthodox Christology,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 12 (January 1, 2008): 435.

<sup>39</sup> Beeley, “Eusebius’ *Contra Marcellum*,” 445–47.

<sup>40</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Hilarius v. Poitiers,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>41</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Phöbadius,” 1994, OCLC.org.

schismatic bishop Lucifer, took a hard line against Arianism, refusing any appearance of compromise.<sup>42</sup> Epiphanius (d. ca. 403) distinguished himself as a combatant against heresy and extended his condemnation of Arianism to Origen and his writings, which he blamed as the source of that error.<sup>43</sup> So many of these authors were swept up in the Arian debate as a central concern for their pastoral defense of the faith, and not only on the local level. The only authors who seem to have remained largely outside of the fray were Zeno (ca. 300–371), whose sermons contain only one which deals with the Arian question,<sup>44</sup> Tyconius (ca. 330–ca. 390), the author of *De physicis* (Ps.-Victorinus, 4<sup>th</sup> c.), Optatus (d. pre 400), whose attention was drawn to the Donatist schism, and Ambrosiaster (*fl.* 366–384), whose commentary did not highlight his Nicene commitments.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, these are authors about whom we know little, so their larger work, now lost, might have led to another conclusion.

Another new characteristic of ministry in this period was the question of the relationship between the church and state once Constantine had made the priests and bishops civic functionaries. Eusebius and Optatus viewed the Christian emperors as ministers of God with divine authority to protect and promote the church. Others, like Athanasius and Ambrose, would have to take a more critical position, since they found themselves at times outside of imperial favor and in opposition to imperial religious policy. It is not coincidental that the application of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to civil rulers gains traction precisely in this period.

This set of church fathers—some of whom made monumental contributions to the articulation of the church’s theology—made few references to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) compared to

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<sup>42</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Gregor v. Elvira,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>43</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Epiphanius v. Salamis,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>44</sup> BBKL, s.v., “Zenon v. Verona,” 1998, OCLC.org.

<sup>45</sup> Gerald L. Bray, “Translators Introduction,” in *Commentaries on Galatians—Philemon: Ambrosiaster*, ed. Gerald L. Bray, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), xix.

other Fathers. Among these fourth-century writers and preachers, Eusebius of Caesarea and Hilary of Poitiers stand out with more extant references—eight and six instances, respectively—while Athanasius, Zeno of Verona, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Elvira, Optatus of Milevis, Ambrosiaster, Epiphanius, Ambrose, Tyconius, and Ps.-Victorinus tally one to four references each. Under the name of Athanasius come two citations from the *Expositio in Psalmum* and seven in clearly pseudo-Athanasian literature, five of which appear to come from the fourth century.<sup>46</sup> For these authors, what particularly shapes this period is the challenge of Arianism which then necessitated that the terms of the psalm—“gods” and “sons”—be related to (and ultimately contrasted with) the unique divinity and Sonship of the Word of God.<sup>47</sup> The pastoral concerns of teaching and defending the faith come to the fore, even as the application of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for the spiritual life remains.

#### How the Psalm References Old Testament Stories

Among the church fathers in this period, there are significant instances of reading Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in the context of the Old Testament. These contrast with the unitarian approach demonstrated by the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* which indicated little to no integration of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) with the rest of Scripture. Victorinus, similar to Justin at the head of the exegetical tradition, sees Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) as a reference to the divine status once lost by Adam but now available to those who pray for God to grant them a godly life.<sup>48</sup> Ambrose, too,

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<sup>46</sup> The *Liber de definitionibus* (PG 28:533–53) appears to be a seventh-century compilation with earlier material as its source. The *Quaestiones aliae* (PG 28:773–96) is yet more difficult to date.

<sup>47</sup> An Arian application of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to Christ would be facilitated by those New Testament passages which, practically alluding to the psalm, name him “Son of the Most High” (Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32, 8:28), thus suggesting to them that he stands on equal footing with the other so-called “gods.”

<sup>48</sup> Ps.-Victorinus, *De physicis* 15 (PL 8:1303D–4A).

connects the Psalm to the story of Adam’s fall, understood as an ironic tale in which the one who had been made in the likeness of God fell to become deceptive like Satan in his quest to become like God.<sup>49</sup> Gregory of Elvira relates the passage to Reuben as the firstborn of Jacob and all of Israel as a kind of “firstborn” and “sons of God.”<sup>50</sup> Eusebius, who is the first to witness to the existence of the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature,<sup>51</sup> joins the *Recognitions* in concluding that the referent of the Psalm is the Jewish leaders.<sup>52</sup> He takes it as a word of judgement against them in that context. In his application, however, he extends the significance of the psalm both to godly human beings in general and to any civic leaders who exercise divine authority as those who are adopted or honored by God.<sup>53</sup> This application of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to civic leaders opens up a line of thought which, though little followed in the patristic period, would come to dominate later thinking on the psalm.<sup>54</sup> A further Old Testament context for the meaning of the psalm is posited

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<sup>49</sup> Ambrose, *Parad.* 13.61 (PL 14:322).

<sup>50</sup> Gregory of Elvira, *Tract. Orig.* 6.

<sup>51</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.28.

<sup>52</sup> Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.*, Psalm 82 (LXX 81) (PG 23:984). Additionally, *Exp. Psalm.*, Psalm 82 (LXX 81) (PG 27:365), a work attributed to Athanasius but questioned by many, also identifies the gods of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as the unjust Jewish leaders, now removed from authority by the cross of Christ.

<sup>53</sup> Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.*, Psalm 82 (LXX 81) (PG 23:984). Eusebius reflects typical rhetoric of the day which calls judicial authority to account. See Jill Harries, “Constructing the Judge: Judicial Accountability and the Culture of Criticism in Late Antiquity,” in *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Miles (London: Routledge, 1999), 127–36. Fourth-century bishops in the Roman Empire were actually granted the responsibilities of the *defensores civitatis*, protectors of the people from the abuse of officials. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 92. At about the same time, Aphrahat makes a different point about authorities to Eusebius’s east, in a time when the Persian Empire is persecuting Christians suspect of disloyalty. Citing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and other associated texts, he teaches that God shares his titles with human beings and both the righteous and the civil authorities may be called gods. Uniquely (and likely because of his pastoral and political context) he observes that it is no sin to offer worship to human leaders, although Christians have turned away from such to worship only the Father and the Son. Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 17, 4–8 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 13.387–90).

<sup>54</sup> Thus, for example, both magisterial Reformers, Luther and Calvin. Joel Biermann, *Wholly Citizens: God’s Two Realms and Christian Engagement with the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017); John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 10: *Psalms, Part III*, trans. John King, Internet Sacred Text Archive, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc10/cc10016.htm>. This narrow emphasis on the application to the civil realm in the sixteenth century eclipses the variegated applications we find in the Fathers.

by Zeno of Verona, who reads it in conjunction with Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28).<sup>55</sup> For him, the meaning ultimately refers to godly human beings who either ascend as "sons of God" in their way of holiness or descend as "human beings" when they turn from God.

Thus, a handful of these authors principally read Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) as intertextually linked with some other Old Testament passage, modelling the integrative exegesis so common among the Fathers. These efforts also leverage the passage for communicating important aspects of the faith: the fall of Adam, God's call to Israel, the responsibilities of justice, and the possibility of ascent to God. For pastoral purposes, such usage of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) taught the church's intertextual exegesis with its corollary commitments to the unity and inspiration of Scripture as well as reviewed the narrative of salvation history, a universal goal of catechesis.<sup>56</sup> By far, however, the bulk of the material from this period endeavors to explain how human beings may become gods, how Christ is the unique Son of God, and, at the same time, how these are related.

### How Human Beings May Become Gods

At the beginning of this period, Eusebius joins two distinct components for the deification of human beings: human beings both become holy and, by participating in the Holy Spirit, they are united to God through grace by the coming of the Word.<sup>57</sup> Athanasius affirms both of these points, but particularly emphasizes an ontological point: the need for corruptible humanity to participate in the incorruptible Word to attain immortality.<sup>58</sup> The dubious Athanasian text,

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<sup>55</sup> Zeno of Verona, *Tract.* 1.37, 95.

<sup>56</sup> Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 99.

<sup>57</sup> Eusebius of Caesaria, *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:105, 23:1013).

<sup>58</sup> "For the human being is by nature mortal, having come into being from nothing." Athanasius, *Inc.* 4.6.8 (Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. John Behr, Popular Patristics 44B [Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary

*Expositio in Psalmum*, on the other hand, explains the “divinity” of the Christian as the life of faith and discipleship.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Cyril of Jerusalem points to the faithfulness of the newly minted Christians as a divine attribute reflecting their faithful God.<sup>60</sup> Optatus teaches that all Christians become children of God by baptism, an important assertion for him in his fight against the Donatists and their denial of the validity of Catholic baptism.<sup>61</sup> The Donatist Tyconius, for his part, interprets the Book of Revelation to indicate that some of those without the seal of God on their foreheads (cf., Rev. 9:5) may yet repent and receive salvation; he finds this reflected in Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in a contrast between the “all” who are called gods and the subset who are told that they must die. Ambrosiaster, in his commentary on the Pauline epistles, uses Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) first to teach that those who trust in God are adopted by God (in contrast with pagans who trust in human beings and become carnal) and then to teach that Christ became impoverished to enrich humanity with his divinity.<sup>62</sup> He immediately draws the pastoral application that Christians should enter into poverty with the poor for their own spiritual benefit (a word which might have been obliquely aimed at those Roman clergy who had become notorious for their luxurious lives).<sup>63</sup> Clearly, these Fathers place differing emphases on the combination of the virtuous character and the union with God needed for divinization. Together

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Press, 2011], 53). Athanasius’s *Inc.* is a particularly rich text in succinctly expressing his views on deification and demonstrating his essential harmony with Irenaeus. See also *Ep. Serap.*, 2.4.3–4. For the centrality of the Creator-creature distinction in Athanasius’s thought, see Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of his Thought*.

<sup>59</sup> (Ps.-)Athanasius, *Expos. Ps.* 49 (PG 27:229).

<sup>60</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procat.* 6.12.

<sup>61</sup> Optatus, *C. Parmenianum Donatistam* 4.2.2.

<sup>62</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Comm. ep. Pauli.* on 1 Cor. 3:4 and 2 Cor. 8:9, PL 17:208, 309. In an original move, Ambrosiaster links Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to 2 Pet. 1:4 and, moreover, in a commentary on a passage which does not obviously link to either of these. Church Fathers tended to cite Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) or, more rarely, 2 Pet. 1:4, and never in the same context. The only subsequent authors who unite these texts are Cyril, *Against Nestorius*, ACO 1.1.5.30, and Ps.-Hilary, *Comm. Ep. Cath. 2 Petri* 34 (seventh century).

<sup>63</sup> David G. Hunter, “The Significance of Ambrosiaster,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17, no. 1 (2009): 16–17.

they witness to the values of baptism, faith, faithfulness, and virtue for the Christian life—all of which are central themes of pastoral care.

Gregory of Elvira offers particularly rich interpretations of the passage. First, from the “gift of God” the human being may “no longer be called a human being but, by a transformation of law and condition, an immortal god”:

For the God of gods himself permits this; he granted this. His lips have prevailed (*vincere*) with the idea that you deserve to be called god because he said, “I said, You are all gods and sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Something that is like something else is such as its exemplar throughout. Nor can something be recognized as alike unless it has particular signs through its personal image. Thus, when he says, “Let us make the human being in our image and likeness” (Gen. 3:19), this *image* of the made and the Maker is in the inner man: invisibility, immortality, mobility. What pertains to the *likeness* is that we ought to live according to the goodness of God in all holiness, righteousness, faith, and piety. Otherwise, the one made from the mud is earthly, corruptible, heavy, transitory, returning to earth from which he was taken. He will return just as the Lord says, “Earth you are and you will go into the earth” (Gen. 3:19). Nevertheless, resurrection has been promised to him. Hence, you ought to observe that it is one thing to be a human being who is from the earth and returns to the earth and there is something else which always lives either to God or in punishment.<sup>64</sup>

This remarkable excerpt argues for a thoroughgoing likeness to God (“as its exemplar throughout”). It also differentiates the image of God in humanity (as the spiritual nature within the human creature) from the likeness of God, understood as “holiness, righteousness, faith, and piety.” The ultimate attainment of these God-like gods is to live to God in resurrection life. At the same time, even the damned who endure everlasting punishment are “gods” in their perpetual existence. Clearly the pastoral force of this passage aims to exhort Christians to a life of holiness which attains to a better resurrection.

In another passage, Gregory links Adam’s fall with Christ’s incarnation, which is the

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<sup>64</sup> Gregory of Elvira, *Tract. Orig.* 1.273. Gregory agrees with the *Ps.-Clementine* premise that only things that are thoroughly alike may bear the same name, but he draws the opposite conclusion about the applicability of the title for “god” for humanity, since he can envision a sufficient likeness among the sanctified.

fulfillment of God's curious comment that Adam in his sin had become "like us." Gregory reasons that the fall occasioned Christ's coming to become like humanity:

Then Adam became as God because Christ became as Adam. He gave him both the divine image and the likeness of a divine way of life, as I have said, by his own taking it up. And he granted eternity and immortality through the resurrection of his own body and he set that human being with himself (*in semet ipso*) in the heavens from which the Word had come. As a result, the one who had been a human being in the beginning would now be made a god by the assumption of God, as it is written: "I said, you are gods and all sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). And thus he says, "Behold, Adam has become as one of us, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:22).<sup>65</sup>

Here the protological problem of how sinful Adam can be declared to be "like God" recalls the entire Christ-event, from incarnation through resurrection, leading to humanity's immortality and ascension with Christ. Image and likeness are both restored as the history of salvation yields an elevation of humanity into a "divine way of life." While Gregory's purpose here is exegetical in clarifying an obscure passage, there is also a Christological and doxological weight to his words which depict the greatness of the salvation achieved in Christ.

By and large, this period offers a theological anthropology which affirms that human beings in Christ should hope to become gods and understands that deification to be an elevated way of life attained by God's grace in union with Christ by the participation in the Spirit.<sup>66</sup> The eschatological potential, which some understood to be realized at least incipiently in all the baptized, is rooted in humanity's creation in God's image and likeness, achieved in the saving work of Christ, and fulfilled in conjunction with a life of faith and virtue.

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<sup>65</sup> Gregory of Elvira, *Fr. tract. Gen.* 3.22.16.

<sup>66</sup> Of less significance in this period, two minor works, the ps.-Athanasian *C. Macedonianos* (PG 28:1292, 1297) and Pheobadius's *C. Ar.* 3, employ the psalm to discuss the way in which Scriptures call human beings (and angels) gods, but without demoting Christ to merely creaturely stature.

## How Christ's Sonship Differs

Given the Christological controversy of the fourth century, the authors of this period refer to the psalm not as Christ did, that is, simply to demonstrate the legitimacy of his title as “Son of God,” but to argue for the sense in which Christ bears his titles uniquely, in a way that far surpasses the “gods” and “sons” of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7).<sup>67</sup> This point becomes perennial, reaching a climax in the Christological debates of the fifth century, but it is here that this point emerges as a significant function of the patristic use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6).

Eusebius of Caesarea presents the typical approach. He utilizes Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to acknowledge that, while there are creatures who may be called gods and sons by grace, only the Second Person of the Trinity is the natural and true Son, God with the Father and sharing in his divinity.<sup>68</sup> “Nature” and “grace” present the mutually exclusive alternatives. In an exploration of John 10:35 which builds on Origen’s insights, Eusebius reads the passage as distinguishing the divine Word—whose advent deifies—from the deified human creatures who remain creatures.<sup>69</sup> Universal worship and astounding works evidence Christ’s singular divinity.<sup>70</sup> Various texts

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<sup>67</sup> Outside of the scope of this study, but worthy of consideration is the shifting social function of citing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). On the basis of given sociological categories, Clark-Soles sees the purpose of the passage in the mouth of Johannine Jesus as “judgement against opponents” (262). For the Johannine community, other functions, like “framing opposition to and from the parent tradition,” might be identified (314–15). Jaime Clark-Soles, *Scripture Cannot Be Broken: The Social Function of the Use of Scripture in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). The greatest discontinuity between the Johannine use of this Psalm and the patristic use is precisely in the new range of “social functions” (pastoral applications) of the verse, including “creating a distinct way of life” and “growing the sect.”

<sup>68</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 1.10.5. For a defense of an “orthodox” reading of Eusebius (in contrast to the Eusebius characterized by Athanasius’s polemics), see Beeley, “Eusebius’ *Contra Marcellum*.” Beeley highlights precisely the later texts, *Contra Marcellum* and *Eccl. theol.*, as providing the proper access to Eusebius’s theological position.

<sup>69</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 1.20.20.

<sup>70</sup> Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:1033, 28). Cf., *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:1084, 28–31): “No one will be compared to him nor equated with him, the Elect One who is also the Only-Begotten and Firstborn of all creation, the Word and Wisdom and Power and Wisdom of God.” The repetition of “Wisdom” in the text is likely due to a problem with the transmission of the commentary, which comes to us exclusively through the catenae. Cf., Michael J. Hollerich, “Eusebius’ *Commentary on the Psalms* and Its Place in the Origins of Christian Biblical Scholarship,” Center for

attributed to Athanasius follow a similar line of thought. God-bearing human beings must not be confused with the humanity-bearing God.<sup>71</sup> Creatures like Israel's civil leaders become "gods" in an honorific sense and the godly of the church become "gods" in attributive sense through participation with neither infringing on the unique nature of God's divinity.<sup>72</sup>

In *Contra Arianos*, Athanasius both recapitulates a standard approach to the unique Sonship of Christ and offers a reading of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) nuanced by the original judicial setting of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and his own context:

He is by nature true Son and legitimate from the Father, peculiar to his substance, the only-begotten Wisdom and true and only Word of God. He is neither a creature nor a work, but an offspring peculiar to the Father's substance. Therefore he is true God, *homoousios* with the true Father. But as regards the other kings, to whom he said, "I said, you are gods" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), they have this grace from the Father only by partaking of the Word through the Spirit. He is the image of the Father's hypostasis (Heb. 1:3) and Light from Light, Power and true Image of the Father's substance. The Lord also said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). He always was and is, and never was he not. Because the Father is everlasting, his Word and Wisdom would be everlasting.<sup>73</sup>

His presentation here represents much of the tradition at this point: The Son is the true Son, by nature, of the substance of the Father, unique, not a creature, etc. Reflecting his fourth-century

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Hellenic Studies, Harvard University, [https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5874.8-eusebius%E2%80%99-commentary-on-the-psalms-and-its-place-in-the-origins-of-christian-biblical-scholarship-michael-j-hollerich#noteref\\_n.3](https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5874.8-eusebius%E2%80%99-commentary-on-the-psalms-and-its-place-in-the-origins-of-christian-biblical-scholarship-michael-j-hollerich#noteref_n.3).

<sup>71</sup> Ps.-Athanasius, *Hom. occursum Dom.* (PG 28:124); Ps.-Athanasius, *Quaest. aliae* (PG 28:773); Ps.-Athanasius, *Sermo annuntiationem Deiparae* (PG 28:933, 16).

<sup>72</sup> As discussed above, in conversation with paganism, Origen inaugurates the tradition of "demythologizing" the Old Testament references to the "gods" by identifying them as Israel's judges and leaders (Origen, *Cels.* 4.31). After the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones* (2.42.7) and Eusebius (*Comm. Ps.* 81), the tradition is carried forward by Athanasius (*C. Ar.* 1.9.2), Diodore (*Comm. Ps.* on Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1), Chrysostom (*Exp. Ps.* on 49:1), Jerome (*Comm. Isa.* 15 on Isa. 56:1), Theodoret (*Quaest. Oct.* 45 and 135, *Interp. Ps.* on Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1, and Ps. 82, LXX 81). Of these, Diodore, commenting on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1) rather than Psalm 82 (LXX 81), provides the narrowest reading (in his admittedly limited extant works), recognizing *only* the judges and rulers of Israel as the referenced "gods." Those of the Antiochene "school" (meant loosely) advocated such a "historical" reading, though most included other possible referents such as priests, angels, godly people in particular, or the people of God in general.

<sup>73</sup> Athanasius, *Or. 1, C. Ar.* 9.2 (Athanasius, "Athanasius's Orations Against the Arians, Book One," in *The Trinitarian Controversy*, trans. William G. Rusch [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1980], 70).

political context as well as the context of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as an address to civil judges, he identifies the “gods” of the psalm as “other kings.” It appears that regular identification of the “gods” with civil rulers had to await this time when civil rulers might be imagined to be godly.<sup>74</sup> Constantine’s unanticipated conversion opened this possibility in the “social imaginary” even if his successors did not all live up to the model. Athanasius also adds the explanation that their divine status is not merely a titular declaration but reflective of how they by grace “partake of the Word through the Spirit.” Thus their divinity is distinct from that of the true Son, who is uniquely so by nature, only-begotten, *homoousios* with the Father, and everlasting. Nevertheless, their “deity” is organically linked with his by their union with him. In this affirmation, the legacy of Origen lives on.

Hilary of Poitiers is also always keen to clarify how the Son of God bears his titles as Son and God in a way far superior to any creature, whether human beings or, as he likes to add, angels.<sup>75</sup> He explains how the Creator-creature distinction points to an underlying ontological distinction. God alone is self-existent, whereas all creatures depend on Another. They are thus limited in power and in their ability to fulfill their own will. The Son, born from the Father, is God together with Him in a strict sense. By his grace and goodness, the Son makes human beings “gods,” meaning that they are transformed into beings with heavenly glory as they put on the “new man” (cf., Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10) and are conformed (in resurrection) to the glorified

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<sup>74</sup> Athanasius is also the only Church Father to cite Wisdom 6 in conjunction with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). Athanasius, *Inc.* 4.6.8. Although the verse he references is later in the chapter (18: “If you are attentive to [Wisdom’s] laws, you can be assured that you will live forever,” CEB), the addressees throughout the chapter are earthly rulers who should recognize that their authority comes as a gift from “the Most High” and that they will be judged severely for any poor stewardship of their responsibilities. The theological congruence with Psalm 82 (LXX 81) is palpable; only the title “gods” is missing.

<sup>75</sup> Cf., Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract. Ps.* (Ps. 135, LXX 134, §9). In this Hilary evidences the influence of Origen, who was unique among early exegetes with his frequent reference to angels when interpreting Psalm 82 (LXX 81).

body of Christ.<sup>76</sup> Hilary thus provides a fulsome account of how human beings are deified in their transformation according to the pattern of the incarnate Son. He twice points to the opening words of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), “I said,” to demonstrate that this bestowal of a divine title is more like an adoption, dependent on the gracious will and declaration of another, and not a natural status possessed from birth.<sup>77</sup> This adoption confers honor and dignity, not a change from the creaturely nature (the human being becomes “God in no sense”).<sup>78</sup> In a uniquely applied reading of John 10 which somewhat adumbrates the position of Nestorius (or perhaps Chalcedon), Hilary argues that even the “man” of the Son, sanctified by his union with him, may also receive the title “God,” as the law permits to holy human beings.<sup>79</sup>

Gregory of Elvira, standing in harmony with the orthodox confession of the period, explicitly rejects the understanding of the Sonship of Christ in the terms of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6)—an exegesis he and others associate with Arianism.<sup>80</sup> His theological opponents, who reject the *homoousios*, make Christ to be a creature who comes from nothing rather than from the substance of the Father. The Arian confession of “likeness” in their term *homoiousios* does not indicate deity, “for even the human being was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), yet he is not God.”<sup>81</sup> The Son, however, originates from the “womb of the Father’s heart.”

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<sup>76</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract. Ps.* (Ps. 136, LXX 135, §5).

<sup>77</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Trin.* 7.10, 14; Cyril of Jerusalem also argues from “I said” to the adopted status of the believer (*Catech.* 11.4).

<sup>78</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Trin.* 6.18 (Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 186, Ebook Central).

<sup>79</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Trin.* 7.24, 9.

<sup>80</sup> Gregory of Elvira, *Fid. orthodoxa*, 158; Hilary and Phoebadius held to the same reasoning. Cf., Hilary of Poitiers, *Trin.* 6.18, 3; Phoebadius, *C. Ar.* 3, 19. In a revealing concession about the pervasiveness of deification language, Phoebadius grants that both he and his opponents recognize that Christians are “gods”; they differ as to whether Christ is more than that.

<sup>81</sup> Gregory of Elvira, *Fid. orthodoxa*, 158.

Gregory's stance indicates that the "gods" of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) are creatures and necessarily remain so.

Toward the end of the century, in the midst of the controversy over the deity of the Spirit and with Arianism still a living threat to the church, Epiphanius's *Ancoratus* and *Panarion* move from the titles of the Triune Persons to their unique and common divinity.<sup>82</sup> This argument then leads him to distinguish the unique applications of the divine titles "father," "son," and "spirit" from their use in reference to created beings. Epiphanius puts forward an array of well-worn distinctions. Creatures, for example, may be "sons" and "spirits" by adoption or in name. They may become a father, but God the Father is eternally so and the foundation of all fatherhood. Likewise, the Son is eternally Son and the Spirit "is not created or made like the other spirits."<sup>83</sup> Epiphanius contrasts eternal being with temporal becoming. The Triune Persons create rather than are created; receive worship rather than give it; judge and are not judged; are atemporal rather than temporal; they illumine, rather than being illumined; they mature others, not themselves being raised up; they grant favors, but do not receive them; they are praised, instead of praising the holiness of God.

His delineation of unique divine attributes and activities over against creation functions to demarcate the Creator-creature distinction, so that it is clear that creatures only bear divine titles "by adoption or in name." Epiphanius shows that while the divine attributes stand in contrast with those of creation (e.g., "not in time" versus "in time"), the activities of God and creation constitute a closed system of reciprocity. God does not stand under another Being as creation stands under and relates to him, as Marcion would have posited. God relates to creation as his

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<sup>82</sup> Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 71.3; *Pan.* 3.74.8. The texts are parallel with little difference between them.

<sup>83</sup> Epiphanius, *Pan.* 3.74.8.6. Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III. De Fide*, trans. Frank Williams, rev. ed., Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 495.

creation—as *the* sole object outside of himself—and creation relates to God *alone* as its God. As a result, the corresponding reciprocal activities of each provide clear points of differentiation along the Creator-creature divide, a divide which the attribution of “gods” in Psalm 82 (LXX 81) does not bridge.

Ambrose in his *De fide*, written for Emperor Gratian to demonstrate Christ’s equality with the Father in the face of the Arian challenge, argues how Christ surpasses the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Against Arians and Photinians, he observes how the Son of God is uniquely the Creator.<sup>84</sup> He is not merely “inspired by the divinity” as some other holy person might be.<sup>85</sup> This would put him on the same level as human beings. Far less is he “god” in the improper sense of the idols.<sup>86</sup>

The Fathers of this early phase of the Christological controversy endeavor to make two points. Yes, human beings may be identified as “gods” and “sons” in the Scripture. No, this attribution to the saints does not mean that the terms indicate the same thing when referring to Christ. The case for multivalence, drawn from Aristotle and first laid out by Irenaeus and Origen, holds. As the Creator, the Son is the true, eternal, divine Son, distinct from creatures who remain creatures, whatever glory they may attain by God’s grace. The Son is so by nature; the sons are such by grace. The pastoral task focuses on preserving this essential truth of the church’s proclamation for the sake of the right understanding of who God is and the salvation he alone accomplishes.

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<sup>84</sup> Ambrose, *Fid.* 2.13, 37.

<sup>85</sup> Ambrose, *Fid.* 5.1, 48.

<sup>86</sup> Ambrose, *Fid.* 5.1 45.

## Didymus the Blind

The number of citations attributed to the Alexandrian catechetical teacher and ascetic Didymus the Blind (313–398) and the special question of the authorship of *De Trinitate* move us to consider his works under a separate heading. A faithful follower of Athanasius and a zealous student of Origen’s writings, he upheld Nicaea, but his works would later be condemned by Synod of Constantinople (553). In his own generation, he distinguished himself as a teacher of the church and could claim men such as Jerome and Rufinus of Aquileia as his disciples.<sup>87</sup> His certain citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) hail from the *Fragmenta in Psalmos* and his commentary on Genesis. Two passages in the *Commentarii in Zacchariam* and three in the *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten*, offer references to John 10:35 and Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) relevant for our study. Four additional citations are found in the *De Trinitate*, a work of uncertain authorship.<sup>88</sup>

The author of *De Trinitate*, responding to the implicit problem of the Scriptures acknowledging other “gods,” clarifies that only the Holy Trinity is actually the one true God.<sup>89</sup> He specifically argues that the Son is never called a creature<sup>90</sup> (though creatures may be called sons). The Holy Spirit, too, is true God and to be distinguished from other spirits.<sup>91</sup> The language of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) does not erase the fact that the divine Persons of the Trinity possess uniquely divine attributes: immortality, invisibility, and wisdom—all from the one divine

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<sup>87</sup> BBKL, “Didymus der Blinde,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>88</sup> Comparing the interpretations does indeed reveal that *De Trinitate* illustrates distinct approaches. In short, this focused survey does not lend support to the argument for Didymean authorship.

<sup>89</sup> (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 2.5; 3.3; 3.24.

<sup>90</sup> (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 3.3 (PG 39:821, 38).

<sup>91</sup> (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 2.5.4, 4.

essence.<sup>92</sup>

In *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, Didymus, too, states that the Son uniquely shares in the divinity of the Father.<sup>93</sup> The phrase of the psalmist, “God of gods,” applies specifically to the Son and his rule over “gods,” meaning both holy human beings and angels.<sup>94</sup>

*De Trinitate* repeatedly affirms that human beings may merely be “called” gods by adoption through grace.<sup>95</sup> This traditional language does not occur in texts that are clearly penned by Didymus. Rather, Didymus in *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, echoing Origen, explains that the terms “man” or “god” may function as relative terms of praise or blame.<sup>96</sup> The Scriptures identify Ishmael, for example, as a “rough man,” whereas those progressing spiritually may be called “gods.”<sup>97</sup> In the time of Noah, while “*all* humanity” was “pondering evil,” Noah himself escaped that blanket condemnation because he was “not human in every respect.”<sup>98</sup> The three passages from the *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten* fit with this pattern: the “gods” differentiate themselves from “humans” who delight in human pleasures;<sup>99</sup> the “gods” are cognizant of the end of humanity, which they actualize by their own dying to this world;<sup>100</sup> and the “gods” are righteous, a predication no “human” attains.<sup>101</sup> Didymus’s willingness to conceive of humanity surpassing

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<sup>92</sup> (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 3.24.

<sup>93</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 801.

<sup>94</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 1195 on Ps. 136:1–3 (LXX 135:1–3).

<sup>95</sup> (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 2.5.4, 3.3, and 3.24.

<sup>96</sup> Didymus, *Comm. Ps.* on Ps. 31:19 (LXX 30:20). The parallel text from the *Sel. Ps.* attributed to Origen is found at PG 12:1137, 55.

<sup>97</sup> Didymus, *In Gen.*, on 16:12.

<sup>98</sup> Didymus, *In Gen.*, on 6:5.

<sup>99</sup> Didymus, *Comm. Eccl.* 40, 25–41.

<sup>100</sup> Didymus, *Comm. Eccl.* 199, 9–21.

<sup>101</sup> Didymus, *Comm. Eccl.* 219, 24–220, 5.

humanity recalls Origen and Clement of Alexandria, the leaders of the Alexandrian catechetical school before him.

Also like Origen, Didymus observes that the “sons of God” participate in Christ through the Word.<sup>102</sup> They do divine works, but not by their own power as God does, but through faith and prayer.<sup>103</sup> Unlike God, who *is* holy, they *become* holy.<sup>104</sup> While all “human beings” necessarily die, those who have been united to God as gods enjoy eternal life.<sup>105</sup> Prophets prophesy by virtue of the fact that the Word of God has come to them, making them inspired “gods.”<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, the final eschatological revelation of God and humanity will demonstrate that all human beings have borne the image of God.<sup>107</sup>

In elucidating Psalm 82 (LXX 81), *De Trinitate* refers the multivalent senses of “gods” to angels and even demons—though the latter are most clearly not “true gods.”<sup>108</sup> For the texts certainly authored by Didymus, Satan proves to be a curious case, but in other ways. When God declared that Adam had become “like one of us” in the fall (Gen. 3:22), the referent was Satan who had also been a member of the divine council but had previously fallen.<sup>109</sup> (This solution originates with Origen’s *Commentary on John* and his *Homily 1 on Ezekiel*<sup>110</sup> and is also copied

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<sup>102</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 836 on Ps. 82:2–4 (LXX 81:2–4).

<sup>103</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 860 on Ps. 86:8 (LXX 85:8).

<sup>104</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 860 on Ps. 86:8 (LXX 85:8).

<sup>105</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 896 on Ps. 89:48 (LXX 88:49).

<sup>106</sup> Didymus, *Comm. Zech.* 2.4. According to Didymus, Zechariah (13:3) foretells a time when those “human beings” without the Spirit will no longer be welcome to impersonate the prophetic office, but it may apparently yet be exercised by the legitimate prophets (the “gods”). *Comm. Zech.* 4.295.

<sup>107</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 836 on Ps. 82:2–4 (LXX 81:2–4).

<sup>108</sup> (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 3.16; Didymus, *Trin.* 3.24.

<sup>109</sup> Didymus, *In Gen.* on 3:22.

<sup>110</sup> Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 32.18.234, 3; *Hom. Ezech.* 1.9.1.

by Procopius as he summarizes Didymus's exegesis).<sup>111</sup> At the same time, just as Adam becomes like Satan, Satan appears as the *human* opponent in Psalm 9, for he had become like a "proud human being" in his disobedience.<sup>112</sup> These further examples illustrate how Didymus does not restrict titles like "god" and "man" to categories of nature but allows them to function as ciphers for spiritual conditions and relationships.<sup>113</sup> He demonstrates this as well when, again following Origen, he links Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to 1 Cor. 3:3 to associate "being human" with injustice, jealousy and strife, characteristics of fallen human beings who are "no longer gods and sons of the Most High."<sup>114</sup>

Finally, Didymus employs Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) to solve the "liar paradox" which some Fathers saw engraved within the Scripture. In the lines of his argument, Didymus again follows Origen; Basil (330–379) and Augustine too will support this solution.<sup>115</sup> This logical and linguistic paradox, which had been formulated among the classical Greek philosophers, asks about the meaning expressed by apparently self-contradictory phrases such as "This sentence is false."<sup>116</sup> In the Scriptures, the case seems to appear in the words of Ps. 116:11 (LXX 115:2) in the form of the declaration made by the human psalmist: "Every human being is a liar." For these

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<sup>111</sup> Procopius, *Comm. Gen.* 3.13, 27. Procopius is dated variously 465/475–528/538.

<sup>112</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 63, 15 on Ps. 9:1 (LXX 9:2).

<sup>113</sup> Bennett observes that in the ancient discussion of whether names correspond with essences, Didymus takes the position that names are indicative of particular relationships and qualities and thus names in the biblical narrative can change as characters change. In this Didymus again appears to be following Origen. Byard Bennett, "The Origin of Evil: Didymus the Blind's *Contra Manichaeos* and Its Debt to Origen's Theology and Exegesis" (Ph.D. diss., Toronto, University of St. Michael's College, 1997), 149–53.

<sup>114</sup> Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* 633a on Ps. 62:9 (LXX 61:10). He also links Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) with 1 Cor. 3:3 in *Comm. Ps.* 151, 2 on Ps 31:19 (LXX 30:20) and *Frag.* 896 on Ps. 88:49 (LXX 89:48).

<sup>115</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Hom. Ps.* 115 (PG 30:109); Augustine, *Enarr. Ps.* 115.3–9.

<sup>116</sup> Bradley Dowden, "Liar Paradox," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/liar/#H4>: "The Liar Paradox was discovered later in the middle of the fourth century B.C.E. . . . The oldest attribution of the Liar is to Eubulides of Miletus who included it among a list of seven puzzles."

Fathers, the human author of the Scriptures escapes the self-condemnation and the apparent self-contradiction of his own utterance in that he has ceased being a human being and has become a god by the transforming effect of union with God.<sup>117</sup>

With respect to our study, we see how Didymus offers a new solution to the question of the “gods” in Psalm 82 (LXX 81)—the predicates “god” and “human” do not indicate fixed natures but relationships and character. The remarks on Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in the Didymean texts (*Frag. Ps.* and *In Gen.*) show a deep openness to influence from Origen while simultaneously representing distinctive (at times idiosyncratic) insights; the exegesis found in *De Trinitate* is more typical of the standard tradition with its focus on the distinctive nature of God.<sup>118</sup> When it comes to the legacy of Origen, Didymus embraces the more unique aspects of his thought and neglects what Origen would come to share with typical Christian exegesis while *De Trinitate* reverses this strategy. In terms of pastoral care, one may discern in Didymus a chief concern for the spiritual life and its advancement in his catechumens and in *De Trinitate* a concern for a proper confession of the one true God. While the different genres of the texts may account for the differences in method and application, it is telling that there is so little overlap in their comments on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6).

### Conclusions from the Early Fourth Century

The contrast between *De Trinitate* and the clearly Didymean texts discloses the same polarity throughout the Christian exegetical tradition thus far: sometimes Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) is

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<sup>117</sup> Didymus, *In Gen.* on 6:5; cf., Mark DelCogliano, “Origen and Basil of Caesarea on the Liar Paradox,” *Augustinianum* 51 (2011): 349–65. Augustine, too, will follow this lead. “*Sermo 81: De verbis evangelii Mt 18,7–9 ubi admonemur ab scandalis mundi cavere,*” Sant’Agostino Augustinus Hipponensis, [http://www.augustinus.it/latino/discorsi/discorso\\_108\\_testo.htm](http://www.augustinus.it/latino/discorsi/discorso_108_testo.htm). See also Augustine, “Sermon 20,” in *Selected Sermons*, ed. and tr. Quincy Howe (New York: Hold, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 147–52.

<sup>118</sup> As for evaluating the authorship of *Trin.* on the basis exegetical patterns, this exploration does not feign to be conclusive, but it does provide more evidence against an attribution to Didymus the Blind.

cited for what it says about God (or rather, how God is distinct from the gods of the psalm) and sometimes it is cited for what it says about humanity, either in its creation, in its fallenness, or in its glorification. Some authors, like Irenaeus, Origen, and Athanasius, draw together these poles as they explain how the unique deity of Christ opens the way for the deification of human creatures. Thus, the teaching of theology proper and the full potential of spiritual life in Christ are proclaimed together. At the same time, this period witnesses instances of Christians reading Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as initially referring to civil leaders and judges (Eusebius, Athanasius), although none would limit the application to that context the way that Diodore of Tarsus will illustrate for us. All of this contrasts sharply with the “unorthodox” Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, which only envision a citation of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in the mouth of a heretic arguing for polytheism. Clearly, the passage was useful for the bishops, pastors, and teachers of the church in teaching those entrusted to their care the Christian faith and its life.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HOLY CALLINGS: PSALM 82:6 FOR THOSE SANCTIFIED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

The period of transition from the fourth to the fifth century brings us to the Cappadocians, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine as well as several other important figures. Their era was marked by a continuing engagement with Arianism, though the debate has matured toward its eventual settlement, even as a new question arose regarding the deity of the Holy Spirit. Also, the institutionalization of the church within the state has reached a new phase after the failed and final resurgence of paganism under Julian and with the rule of Theodosius, who makes Christianity the official religion of the empire. The asceticism of the monastic movement continues its integration within the institutional church of bishops and priests, sacraments and “secular vocations.” Pastoral reflections on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) reflect this new context.

#### Late Fourth-Century Works with Minimal Reference to Psalm 82

Citations of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) at the end of the fourth century move away from a specifically Christological application to reflect narrower pastoral and theological concerns in the church of the time. Catechetical and ascetic readings,<sup>1</sup> an apologetic for the deity of the Spirit,<sup>2</sup> and an emphasis on the dignity of the clergy stand out as marks of this age.<sup>3</sup> Diodore of Tarsus (*fl.* 362–394), also steps forward to represent a reading of the passage confined to the Old

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, 335–394; Evagrius, ca. 345–399; *De virginitate*, mid to late fourth century.

<sup>2</sup> Faustinus, *fl.* ca. 380; Basil, 330–379.

<sup>3</sup> *Apostolic Constitutions*, a late fourth century compilation; Filastrius, *fl.* 381–391. Gregory of Nazianzus also makes an apparent allusion to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in his early work, *Or.* 7.23: “It is necessary for me to be buried with Christ, to rise with Christ...indeed, to be called god myself” (Thomas, *Image of God in Nazianzus*, 126). For him, deification is the restoration of the divine image achieved by Christ and granted in baptism through union with his saving work. While Thomas describes Gregory’s “theosis” as ontological (as well as functional, ethical, relational, and experiential), she observes that this represents a “quantitative” rather than a “qualitative” increase, in no way bridging the gap between the self and God (Thomas, *Image of God in Nazianzus*, 8).

Testament context. Notably, this survey finds no extant texts from these authors connecting Psalm 82 (LXX 81) with any claim that believers may surpass human nature.<sup>4</sup> In this some impact of the Origenist controversy may be discerned, as theologians grew skeptical of the theological expressions he promoted. Also the rising interest in Aristotelian thought may have promoted a more static definition of nature.

Gregory of Nyssa (335–394) conducted his pastoral responsibilities amid the superlatives of his contributions to the church, for he was one of the greatest theologians and mystics of the ancient church.<sup>5</sup> Trained as a rhetorician, he turned toward the service of the church and ascetic discipline, eventually providing key leadership in the Council of Constantinople (381). In a homily on Ecclesiastes, Gregory references the “sons of the Most High” in connection with “a moment for giving birth and a moment for dying” (Eccles. 3:2).<sup>6</sup> Those who are born “at the right time” are those who through the practice of virtue attain to this divine sonship. This paraenetic exegesis, not unusual for a monastic mind, does not mention the possibility of deification proper, nor grace, nor adoption, for that matter. Although not a clear allusion to Ps. 82:6b (LXX 81:6b), since “sons of the Most High” appears elsewhere in the Scripture (namely, Luke 6:35 and its call to love one’s enemies and practice generosity), this passage bears many of the characteristics of other patristic passages under discussion. Gregory contrasts the different

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<sup>4</sup> After Porphyry, philosophers were more disposed to harmonize the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions. Miira Tuominen, *The Ancient Commentators on Plato and Aristotle* (Duhram, U.K.: Routledge, 2016), 10, Ebook Central. The accommodation to Aristotle may help account for the increasing resistance against imagining that the human creature may surpass human nature by participation in God. Furthermore, the church’s maturing reflection on Christology, with an insistence on the full humanity of Christ who is nevertheless the fully incarnate God, and on pneumatology, with an acknowledgment of the deity of the Spirit and his deifying power, might have opened the imagined possibilities of what God might achieve in humans as humans.

<sup>5</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Gregor v. Nyssa,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. Eccl. 8* (P. J. Alexander, *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 5 [Leiden: Brill, 1962], 379–80, TLG).

types of birth by which human beings become different types of children either through the practice or the neglect of virtue. The virtuous “receive God into themselves” (δέξασθαι ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸν θεόν),<sup>7</sup> have Christ formed in them, and become competent in doing good. The child of God is thus characterized by both transforming virtue and personal union with God. This rebirth realizes the “natural design” of humanity (ὁ τῆς φύσεως λόγος).<sup>8</sup> In this passage, he clearly aims to exhort his hearers to the full practice of the Christian life in order to attain to the fullness of its promises.

Next, Gregory’s catechetical application of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) coheres with the broader Cappadocian project to reach out to “wealthy Platonic rhetoricians and invite them to spiritual fulfillment in the Christian camp after the collapse of Julian’s revolt.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, his *Great Catechetical Oration* proclaims the grace of baptism but warns that one must not presume a divine transformation if one’s life is not manifesting the godly works fitting for a child of God.<sup>10</sup> In this context, Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) serves as a prophetic judgment against those who had been named “sons of the Most High” but forfeited that title to be renamed “sons of human beings.” Like the just discussed *Homily 8 on Ecclesiastes*, the approach here suggests themes of Platonic spirituality in correlating the way of ascent to God with the way of virtue; he thus connects with his catechumens by invoking the presuppositions of their own worldview.<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. Eccl. 8* (Alexander, *Gregorii Nysseni opera* 5:380, 5–6).

<sup>8</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. Eccl. 8* (Alexander, *Gregorii Nysseni opera* 5:380, 11–12). This phrase, ὁ τῆς φύσεως λόγος, recalls the Stoic tradition as well as passages in Philo of Alexandria: *Spec.* 11.29 and *Opif.* 143. Cf., G. Christopher Stead, “Logic and the Application of Names to God,” in *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium I*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, ed. G. T. Runia and G. Rouwhorst, vol. 148 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 349–50.

<sup>9</sup> McGuckin, “Deification in the Cappadocians,” 98. In his funeral oration, Nazianzus praised Basil’s pastoral efforts in gaining sheep for Christ’s flock. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. Bas.*, 71.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Catech. Magna* 40, 46–67.

<sup>11</sup> Nyssa endorsed the principle that instruction must begin with the presuppositions of the hearer. See Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 101. He also accepted the project of clarifying the relationship between Christianity and

difference, however, is that for Nyssa the gift of joining God’s family comes with baptism—it is not earned through virtue—but virtue becomes the manifestation of the gracious transformation. The gift of baptism already provides the foundation for the restored likeness, for “what becomes a child of another is fully of the same kind (ὁμογενές—same family/genus/character) with its begetter.”<sup>12</sup> Gregory’s evangelistic efforts among the educated classes would thus incorporate the Christian concept of grace with the general expectation of spiritual transformation and ascent. Also as a uniquely Christian point, he names holiness the ultimate characteristic of the glorified Christian. Pastorally, he admonishes his catechumens not to neglect the grace of baptism, as others have done, but to direct their attention to the indescribable future God offers his people and to make their life choices accordingly.

Offering another example of an ascetic reading, Evagrius (ca. 345–399) models the pastoral practice of spiritual counsel. The first author from the anchorite tradition and both a student and a teacher of monastic spiritual disciplines, Evagrius’s insights earned the respect of his fellow monks and his writings gained a wide audience, ever increasing over the centuries, though many of his works have been lost.<sup>13</sup> His earliest surviving correspondence, *Epistula fidei*, echoes Origen and Irenaeus in contrasting the senses of “G/god” when applied to Christians, to idols, and to the one true God.<sup>14</sup> It presents a wholly “traditional” negotiation of the problem of the referent in the psalm, even if his *Great Letter* suggests that the deified may merge “completely”

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Platonism which Origen had left unresolved. McGuckin, “Deification in the Cappadocians,” 108.

<sup>12</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Catech. Magna* 40, 52–53.

<sup>13</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Evagrius Ponticus,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>14</sup> Evagrius, *Ep. fidei* 3 (or Ps.-Basil, *Ep.* 8.24). Stephen J. Davis, “Deification in Evagrius Ponticus and the Transmission of the Kephalaia Gnostika in Syriac and Arabic,” in *Faith, Reason, and Theosis*, ed. Aristotle Pananikolaou and George Demacopoulos (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

with the divine nature like a river flowing into an infinite ocean and so assume its properties.<sup>15</sup>

His piece, *On Thoughts*, identifies wicked thoughts as demonic temptations, inevitable but able to be resisted, especially as one grows in virtue.<sup>16</sup> Evagrius places his citation of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) within a larger structure regarding two kinds of temptations and two corresponding kinds of death.<sup>17</sup> One may sin “as a human being” and die as a human being, being buried by human beings, or one may sin as an irrational animal and be left to the birds of the air. Psalm 82:7 (LXX 81:7) reflects the first set of these options. Evagrius quotes verse 6 simply for context and without comment. Verse 7, however, nicely fits with his argument that those who “will die as human beings” (ὡς ἄνθρωποι) must have sinned as human beings, that is, in a human way. He identifies those sins as sins of “vainglory or pride or jealousy or accusation” (κενοδοξίας ἢ ὑπερηφανίας ἢ φθόνου ἢ κατηγορίας).<sup>18</sup> Although the Greek terms do not match, this list conceptually recalls 1 Cor. 3:3—a text Origen was the first to associate with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6)—as Paul labels “jealousy and strife” (ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις) as sins characteristic of humanity. Evagrius further expands on Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) by explaining that to “die as human beings” means to be buried. The striking aspect of the development of the thought here is the complete neglect of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). Evagrius’s interpretation is fully shaped by his own interests in shepherding the interior life and outlining sin’s consequences for burial. He does not take the opportunity to delve into the possibilities of deification or the nature of sonship or even the “falling” of the ruler—all topics which quickly drew the attention of other ecclesiastical

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<sup>15</sup> Davis, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Newhauser, *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), 17.

<sup>17</sup> Evagrius, *De malignis cogitationibus* 18, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Evagrius, *De malignis cogitationibus* 18, 4.

writers. Evagrius, in writing “on wicked thoughts,” keeps his thoughts to his task and keeps his application narrow to his purpose of shaping the interior life as he motivates his readers to resist sin and practice virtue.

One more ascetic text, *Liber de virginitate*,<sup>19</sup> comes to us under the name of Basil of Caesarea, although some have argued for the authorship of Basil of Ancyra. Irrespective of the author, the work’s spiritual concern is to promote the ascetic practice of virginity. It turns to Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) as a warning against falling from virginal chastity. Virginity promises to make one “like the angels in heaven”;<sup>20</sup> consequently, the story of the sexual indiscretions of the “sons of God” (often taken as angels) with the “daughters of men” precipitating the flood proves a cautionary tale (Gen. 6:2). The allusion to Psalm 82 (LXX 81) suggests that those who maintain chastity not only become “equal to angels” but perhaps also belong in the category of “gods” and “sons of the Most High.” Unsurprisingly, in *Virginitate* the central characteristic of the deified is faithfulness to their vow.

Faustinus (*fl.* ca. 380) was a Roman presbyter and a follower of the staunchly pro-Nicene Bishop Lucifer like Gregory of Elvira. Faithful to that position, he wrote an anti-Arian explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, reflective of his dependence on Ambrose and Hilary of Poitiers.<sup>21</sup> His polemics were also directed against the “Pneumatomachians” and their denial of the deity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> As part of his argument, he asserts the principle that the true God

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<sup>19</sup> Basil the Great, *De virginitate de Saint Basile*, ed. A. Vaillant, Texts Publiés Par l’Institut d’Études Slaves 3 (Paris: Institut d’Études Slaves, 1943). Vaillant does not view the attribution to Basil of Caesarea as problematic and locates the text in a time before the foundation of monasteries for women (iii).

<sup>20</sup> Cf., Matt. 22:30, again a verse first associated with Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) by Origen.

<sup>21</sup> H. A. G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to Its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Faustinus Luciferianus, *Trin.* 49, 3.

always bears his names. Psalm 82 (LXX 81) provides a counter example of how the term “god” in a derived sense can apply to human beings, who may then lose that status.<sup>23</sup> Faustinus associates the sense in which human beings may be called gods with their sanctification. The saints (holy ones) may be called gods in that they live pious and just lives and—especially—as the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in them (a support for the deity of the Spirit). This involvement of the Holy Spirit rather than the Word (per John 10:35) appears precisely at this period in which some are contesting the Spirit’s deity. As is typical for writers in the church, Faustinus affirms that all of this comes to Christians by the grace of God.

The *Apostolic Constitutions*, written anonymously about 380 with a concern for church order and discipline, take the “gods” of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in conjunction with Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), rendered “You shall not speak evil of gods.”<sup>24</sup> In two separate references, “gods” indicate the bishops, whose sacramental ministry brings the faithful into the adoption of sons.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This illustrates again how the rhetorical training, which included the practice of making comparisons (*syncretism*), would move Church Fathers naturally from speaking about God to speaking about humanity in its difference from God. The fourth century witnessed a full blossoming of the role of rhetoric in Christian sermons. See Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 105–6.

<sup>24</sup> Already identified as a problematic text in Ps.-Clement, *Hom.* 16.6, the direct association of Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) begins perhaps with an exegetical treatise on the psalms attributed to Athanasius, *Exp. Ps.* 50:1 (LXX 49:1; PG 27:229). Before *Const. ap.* and Filastrius, we also find Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) in the texts under the name of Didymus the Blind (*Trin.* 3,937, *Frag. Ps.* 81.836 ff.). Afterward, it becomes relatively common, being cited by Chrysostom (*Exp. Ps.* on 50:1, LXX 49:1), Theodore of Mopsuestia (*Comm. xii proph.* on Mal. 2:10), Cyril of Alexandria (*Exp. Ps.*, 1205), a text attributed to Hesychius of Jerusalem (*Comm. Ps.* 77–99, PG 55:732), Theodoret (*Ep.* 147, 211 and 233; *Quaest. Oct.* 45 and 135; *Interp. Ps.* 50 [LXX 49], 1, [PG 80:1229]; *Interp. Psalm 82* [LXX 81], PG 80:1529; *Interp. Ps.* 135:2 [LXX 136:2; PG 80:1921]), and Gregory the Great (*Registrum Ep.* 5.36, 50, CCSL 140). In all, there are seventeen references, making it one of the most useful passages for elucidating Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7).

<sup>25</sup> *Const. ap.* 2.26 and 2.31. Origen explicitly rules out this interpretation when he paraphrases the divine announcement of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6): “I have not called some of you to be gods and others not. It is not that I wish bishops and elders and deacons to be gods but you from the laity not to be gods, but I said, ‘You are gods and sons of the Most High—not some yes and others no, but all of you.’ Next I said this—and the Scripture cannot be broken—that to whom the Word of God comes (John 10:35), that one is a god and that one has become a son of the Most High, but you die on account of the sins of human beings.” Origen, *Hom. 1 Ps. 82* (LXX 82). However, in the fourth century, monks and clergy were coming to be looked upon as the spiritual elite. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 94.

*Const. ap.* exhorts its readers to recognize the dignity and honor which properly belongs to the bishop. Coming to a similar conclusion, Filastrius (*fl.* 381–391), bishop of Brescia and author of a catalog of heresies,<sup>26</sup> counters the claim of some that Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) prohibits cursing pagan idols.<sup>27</sup> He first explains that such an interpretation is contradicted by the actions of Old Testament heroes who burnt and smashed idols. Rather, the passage “means that the just who nurtured true religion from the beginning of the world, that is, angels and other saints, dedicated to the true faith, must not be cursed.”<sup>28</sup> For Filastrius, then, the “gods” of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) are “angels and saints” who properly worship God but who also become “gods” for others as they bear the Word of God to them (adding a reference to John 10:35). These “gods” are such twice over: first before God who glorifies those who glorify him and then before people who need the saving Word which they deliver. While Filastrius does not tie this specifically to the office of the holy ministry, one can see how he approximates the logic of *Const. ap.*

This period brings us to Diodore of Tarsus (d. 392), ascetic, bishop, and one of the most famous exegetes of his day. Founding the exegetical school at Antioch, he taught both Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia and, in contrast with Alexandrian allegorizing methods, promoted a reading of the text which sought the essential meaning of the text within its original narrative setting.<sup>29</sup> Diodore, in his comment on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1), reflects a distinction between the Old and New Covenants which would become typical of Antiochene

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<sup>26</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Filastrius,” 2003, OCLC.org.

<sup>27</sup> Filastrius Brixianus, *Diuersarum hereseon liber*, ed. Vincent Bulhart, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954), 147, 16. Filastrius must also deal with the oddity that his text of Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) reflects a rare reading: “You shall not curse *foreign* gods.” He explains that those who reject the righteous who bring the Word have made them foreigners to themselves by putting themselves outside of God’s people.

<sup>28</sup> Filastrius Brixianus, *Diuersarum hereseon liber* 147, 12.

<sup>29</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Diodor,” 1990, OCLC.org.

exegesis in that he identifies the “gods” whom God summons with the Israelite judges and rulers.<sup>30</sup> Exercising judgment is a human endeavor which makes human beings like God. The title “god” as well as the role of judge are granted by grace. The Jews recognized this and could thus title their judges and jurors “gods” after the true God.<sup>31</sup> While we see this observation as far back as Origen, with Diodore, this demythologized “historical” reading becomes the exclusive understanding of the “gods” found in the Psalms.

We conclude this section with Basil of Caesarea (329–379), whose citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) evidence no further originality. As noted previously, his usage coincides with Evagrius’s in employing the verse to resolve the “Liar Paradox.”<sup>32</sup> He also found the passage useful in his effort to affirm the deity of the Holy Spirit (curiously, he does not invoke it to defend the deity of Christ). *Adversus Eunomium*, directed against the radical Arians, contains three relevant passages. Book 2 argues that identical names in the Bible do not always reveal an identical nature;<sup>33</sup> Book 3, certainly authentic, and Book 5, considered spurious by some, maintain that the deifying work in the believer necessitates the deity of the Spirit.<sup>34</sup> In all of his

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<sup>30</sup> Diodore of Tarsus, *Comm. Ps.* on Ps. 49:1.

<sup>31</sup> Diodore, *Commentary on Psalms 1–51*, ed. Everett Ferguson, trans. Robert C. Hill, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 160, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuaa-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3118143>.

<sup>32</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Hom. Ps.* 115 (LXX 116; PG 30:109).

<sup>33</sup> DelCogliano reconstructs Basil’s theory of names in the context of his anti-Eunomian arguments. In short, Basil divorces names from essences and maintains that they are principally notional. Mark DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea’s Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 103 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 263, Ebookcentral.

<sup>34</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *C. Eunom.* 2.4 (PG 29:580); *C. Eunom.* 3.5 (PG 29:665); *C. Eunom.* 5 (PG 29:772). With respect to Book 5, the identical text, thought to be anonymous, is published in P. Henry under the title *De Spiritu* in *Études plotiniennes I. Les états du texte de Plotin*, Paris: Brouwer, 1938:185–96 with relevant passage at pp. 191–93. Moreschini and Norelli (*Greek and Latin Literature* 2:105) remark on the deep Plotinian influence evidenced in this document. If modern scholars might give *C. Eunom.* 5 to Basil, they take from him *Ep.* 8, which also contains a reference to Psalm 82:6 (LXX 81:6). It is now recognized as Evagrius’s *Ep. fidei* and has already been treated here among his works.

work with this text, he presumes a strong distinction between the Creator and the creature. In fact, in an argument against Eunomius and his predilection to identify names with substances, Basil strongly opposes any substantial deification of humanity:

But there is no one so stupid and so inattentive to the common nature that he would be led to say this [that there is no common human nature]—after all, the passage, “You have been formed from clay, as also have I” (Job 33:6) signals nothing other than that all human beings are of the same substance. . . . Accordingly, since those perfect in virtue have been counted worthy of the designation “god,” human beings would be of the same substance with the God of the universe [if it were true that names always reveal identical essences]. But just as saying this is sheer madness, so too is his logic here equally crazy.<sup>35</sup>

Among his late fourth-century colleagues, no one would disagree with Basil’s assessment here, though no one else worded it so strongly. By this time the Creator-creature distinction is not only firmly set in place but also a well-developed component of the Christian worldview.<sup>36</sup> For the Nicene Christians, the Son and the Spirit belong clearly and uniquely on the Creator side with the Father; others may only be called “gods” by grace, through adoption, and in participation. We do see, at the same time, at least a few voices who indicate that, among humans, only the higher ranks of the clergy receive the attribution of the divine title, something which anticipates some medieval developments that fall outside the range of this study.

This overview of late fourth-century authors and their use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) exhibits the curious characteristic of *not* citing the passage to argue for the Sonship of Christ, a tradition as old as the Gospel of John. Those who stand closest to this traditional use of the Psalm are Faustinus and Basil, who have made it part of their defense of the deity of the Holy Spirit. Basil

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<sup>35</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *C. Eunom.* 2.4–5 (Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, trans. Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Galwitz, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 122 [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2011], 136).

<sup>36</sup> In fact, Bauckham demonstrates that the Creator-creature divide was already clearly established in the Second Temple Judaism from which Christianity arose. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 3. Nevertheless, it took the church centuries to work out the ramifications of that distinction for Christology and other doctrines.

also explains, in one instance, the traditional multivalent meaning of G/god. Furthermore, in addition to the lack of a direct Christological use of the Psalm, none of these authors cite it to counter a pagan defense of polytheism. Perhaps those arguments which employed the Scriptures to defend the traditional gods have died down, at least in the regions represented by these servants of the Word. Instead, we find them employing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to exhort Christians to lives of virtue and respect for those who bring them the gifts of salvation through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. The central pastoral applications of the passage have shifted from apologetics and doctrine to moral edification and discipline within the church. The Cappadocian usage also suggests a certain evangelistic motive, in that the emphasis on the role of virtue in salvation would prove appealing to those with Neoplatonic premises. Across the board, none of these authors conceive of the gods of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as anything other than human beings, whether Old Testament judges (Diodore), virtuous Christians (Nyssa, Evagrius, Faustinus, Basil), or clergy (*Const. ap.*, Filastrius). The text has been fully “demythologized.”

### **John Chrysostom**

Shortly after Nyssa the great mystic theologian and Diodore the great exegete, we come to another extraordinary Father, John Chrysostom (345/347–407), ascetic, bishop, but especially known as the “golden-mouthed” preacher of Constantinople. He never wearied of directing his hearers to the ethical challenges of the Christian faith, which he believed should find their embodiment on every level of the Body of Christ, rank and wealth notwithstanding. His commitment to this ideal precipitated his own exile where, during a hard march to a banishment to yet further regions, he died.

In contrast with the authors just reviewed, Chrysostom principally employs Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to distinguish the Sonship of Christ from that of Christians. Aware of how the Anomoeans

argue that the title “Son” indicates that he shares our inferiority to the Father, Chrysostom’s *Contra Anomoeos* counters that we bear this name merely as a title, but he in reality.<sup>37</sup> As the uniquely only-begotten Son in the Father’s bosom, he has the same substance of the Father and shares his exclusive characteristics—the radiance of his glory (Heb. 1:3); the form of God (Phil. 2:6); equal nature (John 14:9), equal power (John 10:30), equal authority (John 5:21), equal worship (John 5:23), and equal sovereignty (John 5:17). Similarly, in John 1:1, the apparently temporal “was” limits the deity of the Word as little as his sharing with us the title of “sons” and “gods.”<sup>38</sup> John 10:35–36 clearly indicates that the Christ, who is Son by nature, holds this title, given that those who are sons by grace are also free to receive it.<sup>39</sup>

For this defense of Nicene Christology, Chrysostom depends on the multivalence of the terms “sons” and “gods” which he finds throughout the biblical text. In Genesis 6, “sons of God” references godly men who became sexually involved with ungodly women.<sup>40</sup> In Ps. 4:2 (LXX 4:3), “children of men”—those with dull hearts and lives of sin—contrast with the children of God, who by grace retain the image of God through a godly life.<sup>41</sup> At Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1), the phrase “God of gods” confesses God’s superiority to idols, though, as Chrysostom remarks, “gods” may also indicate rulers, godly men, or God’s people in general.<sup>42</sup> God in his

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<sup>37</sup> Chrysostom, *Anom.* 7 (PG 48:758, 29 and 62).

<sup>38</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* 3 (PG 59:39).

<sup>39</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* 61 (PG 59:339, 14). Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* 80 (PG 59:435, 20–21), explicates the logic: “How does he make us gods and sons if he is not true God?” Similarly, though again without referencing Ps. 82 (LXX 82), *Hom. Jo.* 75 argues for an “infinite difference” between Christ and his disciples when it comes to being called “gods and sons of God” (FC 41:304–5). Chrysostom does not hesitate to underline the unique transcendent deity of the Son of God.

<sup>40</sup> *Hom. Gen.* 67 (PG 53:187). Likewise, the Ps.-Chrysostom text *Synopsis Scripturae Sacrae* makes this same identification of the “sons of God” in Gen 6:2 as the descendants of Seth. Ps.-Chrysostom (PG 56:318).

<sup>41</sup> *Exp. Ps.* on Ps. 4:2 (LXX 4:3; PG 55:46).

<sup>42</sup> *Exp. Ps.* on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1; PG 55:241). Cf., *In illud: Memor fui Dei* (PG 61:692) where Ps.-Chrysostom equates the gods of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) with the Apostles.

lovingkindness grants the title “gods” to human beings. Sensitive to the ways in which Israel received the title of “son” in the Old Testament, Chrysostom, with his Antiochene training under Diodore of Tarsus,<sup>43</sup> distinguishes the covenants and notes that the Jews were honored as God’s children,<sup>44</sup> in spite of the fact that they were yet under a spirit of bondage; Christians, however, are truly born again as God’s obedient children and recipients of the Spirit through baptism.<sup>45</sup>

In the aforementioned passages, Chrysostom follows traditional lines in identifying the gods of Psalm 82 (LXX 81). If anything, his willingness to posit a wide range of meanings stands out. But he also offers two remarkable comments about the potential for human beings to become gods in some super-human sense. Commenting on Psalm 12 (LXX 11), Chrysostom claims that Christians become “creators”:

In other words, what he is in heaven, that we are on earth; and as no one is superior to him on high, so no one on earth is like this living being in virtue (κατὰ ἀρετήν). “Be like your Father in heaven,” (Matt. 5:45, 48) Scripture says. He actually gave us a share in his name: “I said, You are gods,” Scripture says, “and all of you children of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). And again: “I have appointed you Pharaoh’s God” (Exod. 7:1): he made him creator (δημιουργὸν) of corporeal and incorporeal things. Whereas at one time Moses transforms (μεταβάλλει) created nature and at another time others transform different elements, he directed us to create (κτίζειν) ourselves as a temple for him (cf., 1 Cor. 6:19). Even if, therefore, you do not create heaven, nevertheless you can create (δημιουργεῖς) a temple for God. For heaven is remarkable for this, that it has God dwelling in it—us too, in fact, through Christ: “He raised us up,” Scripture says, remember, “and seated us with him at his right hand,” (Eph. 2:6) and gave us the task of doing greater things than he himself did. “The signs that I perform,” Scripture says, remember, “he too will perform, and will perform greater ones than those” (John 14:12). In the Old Testament, too, one transformed (μετέβαλεν) the sea (Exod. 14:21), another held back the sun (Josh. 10:13), another

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<sup>43</sup>Francis Young differentiates the exegesis of Antioch from Alexandria as a matter of emphasis between, on the one hand, a more rhetorical approach which seeks the coherence of the story in the written narrative and, on the other, a more philosophical approach which find the coherence in a spiritual dimension. Young, *Formation of Christian Culture*, 161–85.

<sup>44</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* 14 (PG 50:93).

<sup>45</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 13 on Rom. 8:12–13 (PG 60:525). A related identification appears in the Ps.-Chrysostom text *De non iudicando proximo* (PG 60:764) where the “gods” are the Jews before and during the time of Christ, who then stands in their synagogues (per Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1) as the incarnate God.

bade the moon stand still, yet another diverted its rays toward himself (2 Kings 20:9–11), the children in the furnace restrained the force of the element in the furnace, the raging flames lost their roar and in bondage fell to hissing” (Dan. 3).<sup>46</sup>

Christians are thus something like creators of heaven when they make themselves a fit temple for God. They sit with Christ at the right hand of God. The godly perform wonders which demonstrate divine power to transform nature. In all of this Chrysostom attributes a remarkable agency to the believer. Perhaps for the sake of the rhetorical effect, to demonstrate just how much the children of God may become like their Father in heaven (Matt. 5:45, 48), he describes these deeds as the work of Christians, almost as if they were done without assistance from God himself. On the face of it, no other church father claims so much for the possibility of deification in this world.

Chrysostom’s homily on Acts 15:1 offers a second surprising passage. Here he challenges the presumption that the limits of human nature constrain the transforming possibilities of the will:

For, tell me, what is man? If one were asked, will he be able to answer outright the questions: in what way does he differ from the animals, how is he akin to heavenly beings, what can be made out of man? He won’t be able to answer straight, will he? I, for my part, don’t think so. For just as in regards to the material composition, he is thus a human being in regards to the human substance (τὸ ὑποκείμενον), but he is able to become both an angel and a beast. . . . Consequently, for those who so employ themselves, each human being may become anything, even an angel. Why do I say [only that he may become] an angel? The man can become a child of God. For we read, “I have said, You are gods, and all children of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). And here’s something more—the power to become god and angel and child of God is put into his own hands. A man can be an angel-maker (ἀγγέλου δημιουργός). Perhaps this saying has startled you? But hear what Christ says: “In the Resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like unto the angels” (Matt. 22:30). And again, “He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (Matt. 19:12). In short, it is virtue which makes angels. This is in our power. Therefore, we are able to

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<sup>46</sup> Chrysostom *Exp. Ps.* on Ps. 12:8 (LXX 11:9; Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 1 [Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998], 221). The Greek text may be found at PG 55:148. The passage continues with yet further examples of miracles.

make angels, even if not in nature, certainly in will.<sup>47</sup> . . . Let no one then grieve or be vexed with his nature as if it were a hindrance to him, but with his will. . . . So we likewise, if we are ignorant of our own nature, shall despise it a great deal. But if we know what it is, we shall exhibit great zeal and reap the greatest of profits. For from this nature is wrought a royal robe, from this a royal house, from this nature are fashioned royal members—all things kingly. Let us not then misuse our own nature to our hurt. He has made us “a little lower than the angels” (Ps. 8:5; LXX 8:6), I mean, by reason of death. But even that little we have now recovered. There is nothing therefore to hinder us from getting close to the angels, if we will.<sup>48</sup>

In this grand passage which celebrates the potential of the human nature as a material for glorious possibilities, Chrysostom sets himself apart from those Fathers who identify the human being as inherently sinful and corrupt. From this humanity, Chrysostom argues, the will is able to fashion a beast or an angel, even a god. Characteristics of this “divine” human being include dwelling in heaven and becoming royal as the king’s new royal robe/house/members.<sup>49</sup> Chrysostom’s very positive painting of human potential here indicates a more positive evaluation of the capacities of the human will, even after the fall. In the end, it is clear that the human ascent propels its way upward by the commitment to attain virtue through the exercise of the will. As such, nothing hinders the human being from becoming “god and angel and child of God.”

Chrysostom, who recognized that many came to the church to be entertained with oratory, certainly kept his audience’s attention at this point with his startling rhetoric.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, when he states that “we are able to make angels, even if not in nature, certainly in will,” he

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<sup>47</sup> Chrysostom here grants limits of nature (φύσις) but spotlights the power of will (προαίρεσις): ὅλως δὲ ἡ ἀρετὴ ἀγγέλους ποιεῖ· ταύτης δὲ ἡμεῖς κύριοι· ἄρα ἀγγέλους δυνάμεθα δημιουργεῖν, κἂν μὴ τῇ φύσει, ἀλλὰ τῇ προαιρέσει (Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 32; PG 60:238, 27–29).

<sup>48</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 32 (PG 60:238, 4–29, 36–38, 44–54). The final line which articulates the possibilities of human transformation available through the force of will reads: οὐδὲν οὖν τὸ κωλύον ἡμᾶς ἀγγέλων γενέσθαι ἐγγύς, ἂν θέλωμεν (PG 60:238, 53–54).

<sup>49</sup> Cf., Irenaeus also teaches that the human being, given the power of reason and therefore made like God, causes himself to become wheat or chaff by the power of the will. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.4.3.

<sup>50</sup> Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 128. In his reading of Chrysostom’s *On the Priesthood*, Purves also notes that Chrysostom is “prone to hyperbole, as when he exalts the priest into the realm of angels. On occasion his rhetorical temperament seems to push too far in order to make a valid point.” The same phenomenon appears to be taking place in the passages before us. Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 53–54.

makes it clear that the defining limits of the human nature persist in the end, if not to restrict one's character, at least to restrict one's ontology. In spite of rhetorical flourishes, Chrysostom stands in accord with Basil's rejection of ontological identity with God as fantastic madness after all. In the end, Chrysostom's pastoral approach combines both the traditional Christological and doctrinal uses of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) with the moral exhortation of his near contemporaries. His boldest rhetoric, fanning his audience to zeal to make themselves into gods, reflects his own passion to share with the others the full measure of life in Christ.

### Early Fifth-Century Authors

Around the turn of the fifth century, four authors—Asterius the Homilist (*fl.* ca. 400),<sup>51</sup> Severian of Gabala (*fl.* ca. 400, d. 452/3), Paulinus of Nola (ca. 353–431), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428)—apply Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) particularly to the saving work of Christ.<sup>52</sup> Mark the Monk, who may represent the next generation, cites the psalm verse only to oppose its misapplication. An anonymous text attributed to Augustine, *Liber de divinis scripturis*, makes minimal application of the Psalm with a note about the origin of the devil. Also from this century, Ammonius of Alexandria offers an interpretation in connection with the miraculous life-sustaining power of the Apostles.

Apparently active in Palestine or West Syria, Asterius seems to have served as a priest but not a bishop when he delivered his homilies sometime between 395 and 410. There are no indications that he was a monk or that he was preaching to any group other than a typical

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<sup>51</sup> This otherwise unknown Asterius is not to be confused with the Asterius the Sophist, who defended a modified version of Arianism.

<sup>52</sup> In *Hom.* 8.10 and *Hom.* 18.15, Asterius does also relate Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to the resurrection of Christ, but in *Hom.* 21.28 he connects it to Ps. 12:2 (LXX 11:3; “the truths have disappeared among them,” but not among the children of God). In this he follows Origen, Didymus, and Basil in associating humanity with falsehoods.

congregation under his pastoral care. His work evinces the influence of Chrysostom, though his use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) clearly goes in a different direction.<sup>53</sup> He places his citation of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in a context which clearly preserves it from too absolute an understanding of Christians as “gods”; namely, he develops a clothing metaphor which preserves the humanity of the believer, even if he or she is overlaid with divinity.<sup>54</sup> With this extended metaphor, he identifies the church as the bride of Psalm 45 (LXX 44), clothed with the incarnate Christ and decorated with the virtues of the godly; in another metaphor, the church appears as a meager soldier granted royal attire by the king who has taken off his noble trappings to disguise himself in lowly form. The interplay of the clothing images—first as fabric woven from the flesh and blood of Christ and then as an exchange of Christ’s divinity for the church’s humanity—indicates that the divinization of the church is as real as the incarnation of the Son of God.

Nevertheless, Asterius’s terminology hesitates. On the one hand, he achieves a striking poetic image of Christ taking the garment of humanity and clothing the church with his own exalted royal divinity. On the other hand, Christ has “borrowed” the robe of the flesh.<sup>55</sup> He took it off in death, even if he did so in order to perfect it through his suffering and to put it on again. As metaphors often break down at some point, his illustration does not adequately express that the Son actually *became incarnate* as a human being, that once incarnate he ever *remained* human (even in death), and *to what degree* Christians are transformed by putting on the robe of Christ. On the other hand, the absolutely integral relationship between the person and work of

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<sup>53</sup> Wolfram Kinzig, introduction to *Psalmehomilien*, by Asterius (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2002), 3.

<sup>54</sup> Asterius, *Hom.* 30.5–9.

<sup>55</sup> “For when he borrowed the robe of the flesh and that which he had made he took and he borrowed what he had given and the Jews tore this robe with nails on the cross and cut it with the spear, he took it off in death and washed it and brought it up.” Asterius, *Hom.* 30.8.

Christ and the new status of the church becomes especially clear, as does the role of baptism in bequeathing that status.<sup>56</sup>

Severian, bishop of Scythiopolis and champion of the Council of Chalcedon who was murdered for his confession,<sup>57</sup> asks to whom God is referring when God proposes, “Let us make a human being in our image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26).<sup>58</sup> With reference to Isa. 9:6, he first explores who the “marvelous counselor” for God might be. This brings him to the “Mighty God” in that same passage. The adjective “Mighty” is added to differentiate this God from any others, for there are many gods—and it is here that Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) together with Exod. 7:1 appear. Echoing Epiphanius’s logic in his observation of the correlative relationships which mark the Creator-creature divide, he notes the distinction between those who receive strength, grace, and authority and the One who gives these things. The Mighty God who deifies others is the source and ultimate possessor of all of these divine attributes. Severian identifies another example for his reader: along with Moses, specifically called “god” in Exod. 7:1, he includes the Apostles. With this, he implies that the “gods” are those who rule and lead God’s people. Again, we find that Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) assists in defining a sense in which the title “god” may be given to created beings, but purely for contrast to help distinguish them from the one true God, the sole Creator.

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<sup>56</sup> “So see here the wonderful mystery! Christ and the Church have put on each other! O tender affection, O friendship, O love, O gentle commitment (διάθεσις)! Bride and Bridegroom wear each other. How and in what way? Hear: Christ has born the Church above through the body, because he will dress all people; here below the Church has put on Christ through baptism: ‘For all of you who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ’ (Gal. 3:27).” Asterius, *Hom.* 30.9. The term διάθεσις is difficult to render in this context. The LSJ offers the possibilities “state, disposition toward persons, propensity” (Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon* [Rev., Oxford: Clarendon, 1940], s.v. “διάθεσις”); Kinzig translates it as “einträchtige Gesinnung” (Asterius, *Psalmenhomilien*, ed. Wolfram Kinzig, vol. 2, Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur [Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2002], 495).

<sup>57</sup> BBKL, “Severianos,” 1995, OCLC.org.

<sup>58</sup> Severian of Gabala, *Hom.* 4.

Paulinus, the well-educated and highly cultured bishop of Nola, in one of his letters, begins his approach toward the citation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) when he lists the names and characteristics which Christ shares with his people.<sup>59</sup> The common *nomina* are: strength (Ps. 45:2), inheritance (Deut. 32:9; Ps. 119:57, LXX 118:57; Ps. 142:5, LXX 141:6), light (John 8:12, Matt. 5:14), bread (John 6:51, 1 Cor. 10:17), vine (John 15:1, Jer. 2:21), mountain (Ps. 68:16, LXX 67:17; Ps. 76:4, LXX 75:5), and rock (1 Cor. 10:4, Matt. 16:18). In much of this he appears to be following Ambrose.<sup>60</sup> When Paulinus sums up the wonder of this gracious giving with the psalm citation, he brings the list to a climax with the gift of being named gods and sons.<sup>61</sup> This passage qualifies these titles in three ways. First, the preceding reference to John 1:14 underlines the sonship received through Christ. Deification is thus read in the context of filiation. Second, God gives this gift “to the degree that it depends on him,” implying that something also depends on the human recipient, that is, human actualization completes the reception. The effect of the gift is not automatic. Finally, the gift is universal, at least potentially, as God speaks to all human beings as “gods” and “sons.” This potential, however, fails to be realized because human beings sin. They die as human beings and fall like a ruler, that is, like the devil.

In this same passage, Paulinus next turns to the actual redemption accomplished by Christ through his incarnation and his “quasi” deception of the deceiver. The unrealized potential of deification suggested thus far in the passage is answered by the saving achievement of Christ. Where does this leave Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6)? Of itself, the divine intent expressed therein fails because of human sin, as Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) already indicates. Although Paulinus does not

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<sup>59</sup> Paulinus, *Ep.* 23.43.

<sup>60</sup> Cf., Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 6.97. Scholars have long noted Paulinus’s dependence on this work in particular. Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 218.

<sup>61</sup> Paulinus, *Ep.* 23.44.

explicitly state it, the work of Christ clearly fulfills the divine will and brings even the ultimate hope to reality—human beings in Christ become gods and sons of the Most High. Paulinus’s attention, however, is elsewhere as he concludes this chapter not with the exaltation of humanity to deity but with the demotion of Satan, now subject to a man, the incarnate God Jesus Christ.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, as influential as he was zealous for his exegetical work which covered almost the whole of the Scriptures,<sup>62</sup> twice cites Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). In the first instance, he links it to Mal. 2:10, “Is there not one God who created you? Is there not one Father of you all? Why then is it that you each abandon your brother and profane the covenant of your fathers?”<sup>63</sup> He reads this as a rebuke of Old Testament priests for neglecting their duties. With God as their Father, they are together “gods and sons of the Most High.” While this reading appears to limit the meaning of the psalm to the Old Testament context—as one might expect of an Antiochene exegete<sup>64</sup>—his next interpretation of the psalm leads to a broader application. In his explanation of Romans 8, Theodore observes how the Apostle correlates immortality and resurrection with the revelation of God’s children and their adoption. In this brief context, Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) underscores the pattern, linking dying with humanity and “sons of the Most High” with a presumed contrasting immortality. Here he does not attend to any other sense in which these may also be called “gods.” Furthermore, that title gets subsumed under the title Paul

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<sup>62</sup> BBKL, “Theodor von Mopsuestia,” 1996, OCLC.org.

<sup>63</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Comm. xii prophetas minores*, on Mal. 2.10, 4 (Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, trans. Robert C. Hill, Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 108 [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004], 408).

<sup>64</sup> One recalls how his teacher Diodore only identified the Old Testament judges as the gods of Psalm 82 (LXX 81). At the same time, Theodore’s logic in saying that the priests are gods may be clarified—unexpectedly—by Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril links the “gods” of the Old Testament to the priesthood through Acts 23:5, where the Apostle Paul cites Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27). Cyril makes explicit what Theodore leaves implicit. Cyril of Alexandria, *Exp. Ps. 82* (LXX 81; PG 69:1204).

employs, “the sons of God.”<sup>65</sup>

Of these four authors, we see a range of Christological and soteriological points supported by Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). While Severian is concerned to distinguish the deity of the true God from that of the “gods” he deifies and Theodore focuses on the eschatological attainment of a sort of “divine” status through adoption and resurrection to immortality, Asterius and Paulinus detail the gifts of Christ which come to the people of God through the work of Christ, much of which is already present in the current age. These authors have the psalm serve God’s people in building them up in Christian faith and life.

Mark the Monk proved to be one of the most consequential theologians of the ascetic life.<sup>66</sup> This author, however, has little imagination for a positive reference to the psalm verse or to deification in general.<sup>67</sup> His writing against those who would claim that Melchizedek is a personal appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ provides the one occasion for his use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), which he puts in the mouth of his opponents. He supposes that they argue that there is no harm in deifying Melchizedek, since many of God’s people will experience such glory. For him, however, this logic demotes the unique status of Christ as the only Son of God. One might conclude that Mark’s strong insistence on the Creator-creature distinction and his polemical context have directed him away from any appropriation of the Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) tradition we have been tracing. Even if others may be called “gods” (which he does not explicitly grant here), Christ is uniquely God with the consequence that he may be worshiped. He alone is the divine Savior, whose name brings salvation (Acts 4:12) and who is the very fullness of the transcendent God in bodily form (Eph. 1:23). These, then, are three clear characteristics which belong to

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<sup>65</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Frag. Rom. (in catenis)* 138, 34.

<sup>66</sup> BBKL, “Marcus Eremita,” 1993, OCLC.org.

<sup>67</sup> Mark the Monk, *Melchisedech* 10, 215.

Christ which no other “god” may claim: legitimate worship, effective salvation, and authentic incarnation. Focused on the unique deity of Christ, he affords no positive discussion of human beings becoming “gods.”

In the Latin west, there appeared to be greater inclination to associate Psalm 82 (LXX) and its gods with angels and demons. The pseudo-Augustinian text, *Liber de divinis scripturis sive Speculum*, thus makes a single referent to the Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), as the first of its catena of texts in order to teach that “the devil had been created an angel by the Lord and later was changed due to his transgression.”<sup>68</sup> The other texts in the list<sup>69</sup> are all understood to address either the creation or the fall of the devil. Since the citations are presumed to be self-evident, the author does not elaborate on the meaning of the passages and one must imagine that, as the tradition holds, Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) with its reference to the “fallen prince” has occasioned the citation. The identity of the gods does not directly relate to the author’s point.

A final comment on this period needs to acknowledge Ammonius, whose interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles is preserved in the catena tradition.<sup>70</sup> Although some have posited that this Ammonius belongs to the third century, his restrained exegesis and the conclusions of some recent scholarship identify him as a fifth-century presbyter.<sup>71</sup> In a comparatively tame way, he applies the psalm passage to Paul’s experience of having survived the snake bite after his

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<sup>68</sup> Ps.-Aug., *Liber de divinis scripturis*, 128, 6.

<sup>69</sup> Ps. 104:26 (LXX 103:26); Job 26:13; Isa. 14:12; and Ezek. 28:2, 12–18.

<sup>70</sup> *Catena in Acta (catena Andreae)*, 409.6. The identity of this Ammonius from the catenae has posed a crux for historians. Somewhat idiosyncratic in his interpretation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), Ammonius comes closest to reflecting what might be called an anti-Origenist and Antiochene historicizing of the text, an odd fact for someone with the epithet of Alexandria. Cf., Paul F. Stuehnenberg, “The Study of Acts before the Reformation: A Bibliographic Introduction,” *Novum Testamentum* 29, no. 2 (1987): 108, 112.

<sup>71</sup> Timothy A Brookins, Peter Reynolds, and Mikeal Carl Parsons, “In Defense of Peter and Paul: The Contribution of Cramer’s Catena to the Early Reception of Canonical Acts,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 1, no. 1 (2011): 36.

shipwreck and then being hailed a god by the surprised onlookers (Acts 28:3–6). Ammonius concludes that the faithful may overcome the attacks of humans and animals and become “gods,” at least in the eyes of their pagan contemporaries.<sup>72</sup> Ammonius’s more mundane understanding of the text within the parameters of his own exegetical study displays a historicizing approach preferred by those whom we associate with the Antiochene tradition.<sup>73</sup>

Summarizing the pastoral concerns of this set of authors, we find Asterius extolling the saving work of Christ bestowed on the believer with baptism, Severian teaching the distinction of Christ as the “Mighty God,” and Paulinus and Theodore of Mopsuestia celebrating the sonship of God’s people and that title of honor they now bear. Ammonius restricts his association of the text to the Apostles and Mark the Monk makes no positive use of it at all.

### **Jerome**

Turning to Jerome (340/342–420), we come to a “Doctor of the Church” whose dedication to the interpretation of Scripture, like Diodore’s, moved him to write commentary on almost the whole of Scripture; his zeal for life dedicated to Christ moved him to found cloisters for men and women in Bethlehem.<sup>74</sup> As for his interpretation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), the question of his dependence on Origen (and his occasional outright copying the master) comes to the fore. We include all of the following works under his name in the assurance that they have at the very least

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<sup>72</sup> Ammonius here alludes to the “historical theory” of mythology, popularized by Euhemerus and thus labeled euhemerism, by which remarkable historical figures lie at the root of mythological tales. The stories of the pagan “gods” supposedly originated with stories about human beings which then became exaggerated.

<sup>73</sup> Jewish exegetes, too, “historicized” texts by relating them to other narrative texts within the Scriptures. Daniel Boyarin calls the process “syntagmatic midrash” by which a passage is located within a story. The rabbis also practiced “paradigmatic midrash,” which joins verses which share a common element, a very common practice among the Fathers, as this study shows. Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 27.

<sup>74</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Hieronymus,” 1990, OCLC.org.

undergone the modifications he deemed necessary. The references to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) occur in one letter, eleven commentary contexts, and six sermons on the psalms. Along with his contemporary Augustine, he maintains an unhesitating employment of the passage to address the spiritual needs of his day.

Jerome's earliest reference to Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7) appears in a letter to Eustochium in 384.<sup>75</sup> Detailing the dichotomies of heavenly treasures in earthly vessels and the struggle between the spirit and the flesh, he elaborates on the struggle between the devil and righteous humanity. Jerome connects several passages to Satan's self-exaltation and his consequent fall, but, as we shall see, not with full theological coherence. Like Eusebius, he applies Isa. 14:12 to Satan as the "fallen morning star." He also identifies Satan and the falling angels with the creatures descending on Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28:12), something Zeno considered but specifically rejected.<sup>76</sup> Jerome then takes Psalm 82 (LXX 81), typically understood to refer to human beings, to indicate the falling of angels.<sup>77</sup> Finally he assimilates it to Paul's words about the jealousy and strife of human beings in 1 Cor. 3:3, which he understands to be written "to those who were desisting to be gods." Perhaps the traditional linking of 1 Cor. 3:3 to Psalm 82 (LXX 81) (which dates back to Origen) has induced Jerome to include it, even though it clearly addresses human beings and not angels. In all, we find in Jerome's example something of a hodgepodge of texts made to illustrate the fall of angels and human beings from divine rank to merely human status. His willingness to conflate texts about falling angels and falling humans almost as if they were a single narrative also recalls Origen.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ep.* 22 (PG 54:149.4, 2).

<sup>76</sup> Zeno, *Tract.* 1.37.

<sup>77</sup> From the time of Jerome and Augustine on, the Latin west guards the possibility that Psalm 82 (LXX 81) includes reference to angels as "gods."

Jerome's commentaries on various biblical texts reveal two approaches to interpreting the "gods" of Psalm 82 (LXX 81). His first interpretation, found in the works dating from 386–393, identifies the "gods" as the privileged recipients of divine revelation, whether apostles, patriarchs, or prophets.<sup>78</sup> The coming of the Word of God to them (John 10:35) illumines them with the knowledge of God. Jerome's second interpretation begins about 390 as a parallel option along with the first and then replaces it entirely. It identifies the "gods" as the virtuous and contrasts them with sinful human beings who deserve to die, since they fall under the judgment that was pronounced on Satan.<sup>79</sup> Along with a presumed sinfulness of humanity comes a lack of spiritual insight, so that when Christ asks his Apostles, "Who do *human beings* say that I am?" wrong answers are naturally given. Only the "divine" Apostles can properly confess him.<sup>80</sup> The brief remark from the *Commentarioli in Psalmos* (389–392) fits in the transitional period between these two approaches. There he identifies the "gods" as "angels or saints" who are being judged by God.<sup>81</sup>

Jerome's homilies on the psalms hail from later in his life (386–420), the same period as his commentaries and a time when he was settled in a monastic community in Bethlehem. Given that his addressees were men seeking to conform to the standards of a holy life, Jerome's interpretation of the "gods" in this context always includes a reference to the virtue of those who attain this title. The first two, found in tractates on Ps. 77 (LXX 76) and Ps. 90 (LXX 89), also

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<sup>78</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* 1.1, on Gal. 1:11–12; *Comm. Eph.* 2; *Comm. Matt.* 3, 37; *Comm. Os.* 1.1, 2. It is the Word's coming which also makes Hosea a "Savior" in order to live up to his name.

<sup>79</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 1, 791; *Comm. Mich.* 1.2, 518; *Comm. Soph.* 1, 155; *Comm. Isa.* 6.14; *Comm. Isa.* 15 on Isa. 56:1; *Comm Ezech.* 9.18, 119.

<sup>80</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 3, 37. Similar passages occur in the commentaries on the psalms, where humanity with its vain thoughts lacks God's direction (Jerome, *Tract. Ps.* 93, 77 and Ps. 89, 212).

<sup>81</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Ps.* 82 (LXX 81).

reflect on the question of human nature, the first indicating that Christians are not gods by nature but by virtue because of the indwelling of Christ and the second noting that human nature was originally created good, so that human creatures would naturally be adopted as God's children.<sup>82</sup> The homily on Psalm 82 (LXX 81) both observes the original reference of the psalm to civic (or ecclesiastical!) judges and its application to all people.<sup>83</sup> A number of his homilies employ Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in contexts of dichotomies: the alternative of being guided by the flesh or by God, the contrast between human lying and divine truthfulness, and the opposition between human thoughts and divine instruction.<sup>84</sup> The homily on Ps. 136 (LXX 135) goes further than others when it describes the virtuous perfected human beings as leaving their humanity altogether behind them: "'Give thanks to the God of gods.' The prophet is referring to those gods of whom it is written: 'I said: You are gods'; and again: 'God arises in the divine assembly'—they who cease to be human beings, abandon their vices, and are perfected are gods and sons of the Most High."<sup>85</sup> Here, too, Jerome keeps in line with his monastic asceticism. The moral aspect remains a central component of the definition of the "gods."

In Jerome's employment of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), the influence of Origen makes itself felt in Jerome's instinct to recall the Psalm's contrast between humanity and divinity in the context of other Scriptural dichotomies, his vision of human beings leaving behind their humanity in their ascent through virtue, and his association of the passage with angels, something which had

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<sup>82</sup> Jerome, *Tract. Ps. 77* (LXX 76), 116; *Tract. Ps. 90* (LXX 89), 212.

<sup>83</sup> *Tract. Ps. 82* (LXX 81), 107–16. Jerome's prophetic condemnation of partiality and unjust judgment among church leaders stands in a tradition rooted in Old Testament prophecy and is echoed by Polycarp and Chrysostom. See Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 140–41.

<sup>84</sup> Jerome, *Tract. Ps. 90* (LXX 89), 212; *Tract. Ps. 94* (LXX 93), 77; *Tract. Ps. 136* (LXX 135), 9 respectively.

<sup>85</sup> "...*qui desinunt esse homines, et relinquunt uitia, et sunt perfecti.*" Jerome, *Tract. Ps. 136* (LXX 135), 58 (Jerome, *Tractatus LIX in Psalmos*, ed., G. Morin, CCSL 78 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958), CETEDOC).

become passé among the generation of authors before him. Again, Jerome's dependence on Origen at times is direct and verbal, so that the strong reappearance of Origen's thoughts in his writing does not surprise. As for Jerome's own pastoral application of the verse, he moves from an earlier amorphous use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) which depicts the fallenness of angels and human beings through a more contextualized reading of the Psalm as a reference to judges, prophets, and other leaders to a final phase which deploys the verse as a call to live virtuously. The exegetical journey and resolution follows his own spiritual journey and final settling among the brothers at the monastery in Bethlehem, where practical exhortation became the order of the day.

### **Augustine**

If, according to Alfred North Whitehead, the European philosophical tradition can be characterized as a set of footnotes on Plato, the western Christian tradition might be likewise called a set of footnotes on Augustine (354–430), whose theology determined the questions, if not the answers, for much of what was to follow. Monumental by any standard, Augustine devoted himself to life of asceticism but when called into the episcopacy produced materials for the church across the whole range of her activities: commentaries, doctrinal treatises, polemical and apologetic works, and catechetical and instructional materials. All the while, he did not neglect his pulpit, but ever discharged his office as a spiritual shepherd in the care of his flock.

Any historical study of biblical interpretation will have to give a significant place to Augustine. His voluminous writings, as influential as they are extensive, display a constant engagement with the Sacred Text. When it comes to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), he does not disappoint. He references the verse thirty times in passages which hail from the full range of his works early to late, in contexts as disparate as sermons, commentaries, polemical works, and

catechetical instruction. Augustine both encapsulates much of the tradition which preceded him and provides fresh insights for those who were to follow. Through it all, he demonstrates his pastoral concern for nurturing the spiritual life of the faithful.

In several places, Augustine utilizes the psalm to identify the other “gods” sometimes referenced in the Old Testament.<sup>86</sup> These, for him, are clearly always human beings. He explicitly and repeatedly teaches that the one true God, the Creator, remains in a category by himself over against his creation, which encompasses everything else. At the same time, he expresses an openness, at least at one point, as to the exact identity of the human addressees of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7). He proposes that they might refer to both the elect and the lost as distinct groups or the singular group of all of those called to glory:

One way to understand this is to take “this is my sentence: you are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you” as addressed to those who have been predestined to eternal life, and his words, “yet you shall die as mortals die, and fall as any lordly ruler falls” as spoken to the rest; in this way he is making a distinction among the gods. Alternatively, it can be interpreted as a rebuke to all of them alike, so that he may distinguish those who obey and accept correction. “This is my sentence: you are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you” he says. I have promised heavenly bliss to you all, but because of your fleshly weakness “you shall die as mortals die”; and because of your haughty self-importance you will not be exalted, but will “fall as any lordly ruler falls,” that is, like the devil.<sup>87</sup>

This is a new suggestion. Patristic exegetes do not typically consider the possibility that Psalm 82 (LXX 81) might change addressees between verses 6 and 7.<sup>88</sup> Neither did any other raise the subject of election, a matter of concern to Augustine in particular.

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<sup>86</sup> *Enarrat. Ps.* 84 (LXX 83).11; *Enarrat. Ps.* 86 (LXX 85).12; *Enarrat. Ps.* 97 (LXX 96).14; *Enarrat. Ps.* 125 (LXX 124).9; *Enarrat. Ps.* 136 (LXX 135).2–3; *Civ.* 9.23.1–2, 15.23.

<sup>87</sup> Augustine, *Enarrat. Ps.* 82 (LXX 81).1 and 6 (Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, 73–98, trans. Maria Boulding, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, part III, vol. 18 [New York: New City, 2002], 176).

<sup>88</sup> A similar tact, however, is taken by Athanasius who remarks that Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) is addressed only to some of those named as gods in verse 6 because only some “change.” Athanasius, *Ep. Serap.* 2.4.4. *Const. ap.* 2.26 notes that the bishop is addressed as “god” by Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and insinuates that the title “sons of the Most

Like others, Augustine employs the text as a foil to differentiate the “sonship” of believers from the true, natural, and eternal Sonship of Christ, coequal with the Father.<sup>89</sup> In Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 97 (LXX 96), Christ is confessed as the “great king above all gods” to be exalted over idols, demons, saints, and angels.<sup>90</sup> He argues that this understanding of the psalm accords with Christ’s own proclamation of himself in the Gospel of John, something which offended many of the Lord’s original opponents but which Christians embrace.<sup>91</sup> When Augustine enters into a polemical mode against the Arian Maximinus, he repeats the tactic of citing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to argue that Christ is not to be called “son” and “god” in the same way that believers might be.<sup>92</sup>

His deity, after all, is what enables him to deify those who follow him, as they become gods by participating in him.<sup>93</sup> Exploring the logic of John 10, Augustine asks rhetorically

If God’s speech was made to men (*ad homines*), that they might be called gods, how is the Word of God himself, who is with God, not God? If through God’s speech men become gods, if they become gods by participation, is not he in whom they participate God? If enlightened lights are gods, is not the Light that enlightens God? If those warmed, in a way, by saving fire are made gods, is not he by whom they are warmed God? You approach the Light and you are enlightened and you are numbered among the sons of God; if you withdraw from the Light, you are darkened and you

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High” belongs to the rest of the faithful, but this is not spelled out. Closer to Augustine and likely on his library shelf, Tyconius distinguishes the “all” who are called to be gods from the implied some who are condemned to die. Tyconius, *Frag. Taurinensia* §198. Tyconius’s purpose appears counter to Augustine’s in that he wants to read some possibility for repentance and conversion for those who do not bear the seal of God (Rev. 9:5).

<sup>89</sup> Relevant passages from Augustine in roughly historical order include: *Fid. symb.* 9.16, *Enarr. Ps. 97* (LXX 96).14, *Adnot. Job* 1.38, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 54.2, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 48.9, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 54.2, *Serm. 125.3*, and *Maxim.* 2.15.3.

<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *Enarrat. Ps. 97* (LXX 96).14, 8.

<sup>91</sup> Augustine, *Sermo* 125.3.

<sup>92</sup> *Maxim.* 2.15.3. In this work, Augustine is eager to show how a right understanding of Christ depends on a proper interpretation of the Scripture, by moving beyond literal words to their full meaning, reading passages in the light of others and even of the unity of the whole of Scripture, and recognizing homonymy. These are the same exegetical moves we find in many patristic authors when discussing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). Cf., William A. Sumruld, *Augustine and the Arians: The Bishop of Hippo’s Encounters with Ulfilan Arianism* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), 102–24.

<sup>93</sup> Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 48.10.

are accounted among the shadows. Yet, that Light does not approach itself, because it does not withdraw from itself. Therefore, if God's speech makes you gods, how is the Word of God not God?<sup>94</sup>

Much of this is standard in patristic thought by this time and reflects the Platonic worldview which we find in many of the Fathers.<sup>95</sup> Entities attain attributes by direct participation, specifically participation in the singular Form of the attribute itself.<sup>96</sup> For Christ to enlighten his people and make them lights, he must be the Light itself. Uniquely, in this case Augustine follows the Old Latin (and Vulgate) rendering of *λόγος* in John 10:35 as *sermo*, not *verbum*.<sup>97</sup> This distinguishes the *signum* (*sermo*) from the *res* (the Word of God as the Second Person of the Trinity) in a way which contrasts with eastern fathers' desire to see in the passage an explicit reference of the coming of Christ to the believer.<sup>98</sup> In Augustine's reading, the coming of the *Logos* is mediated through the *sermo*, the signs of human language. At the same time, however,

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<sup>94</sup> Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 48.9 (Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 28–54, trans. John W. Rettig, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 88 [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993], 235–36).

<sup>95</sup> Smalbrugge argues that, at least in one place (*Enarrat. Ps.* 147, LXX 146), Augustine conceives of deification along purely Neoplatonic lines, not in terms of grace and union with Christ but in terms of the soul as a number assimilating to the numberless One. Matthias Smalbrugge, “Augustine and Deification: A Neoplatonic Way of Thinking,” *Studia Patristica* 75, no. 1 (2017): 103–8. One might add that Augustine's earliest extent use of *deificare* is Neoplatonic in that he describes it as repose *in otio* (Augustine, *Ep.* 10). These instances, however, remain outliers in comparison with his typical conceptualization of the issue.

<sup>96</sup> This union with the singular Form which imparts the attribute accounts for the unity of the attribute as well as the universal recognition of the attribute in connection with the Form.

<sup>97</sup> Most manuscripts of the Old Latin do have *sermo*, though *verbum* does occur in a few (Jülicher records three). Adolf Jülicher, *Itala: Das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung*, vol. 4: Johannes-Evangelium (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963).

<sup>98</sup> Carol Harrison notes, on the basis of *Doctr. chr.*, that Augustine holds to an ultimate unity of *signa* and *res* in the unique case of Scripture's texts: “Whereas all other texts and languages are merely signs (*signa*) which function as pointers to a truth which lies beyond them, the text and language of Scripture is not just a sign but actually contains and is the truth (*res*) which it signifies. This is because it is inspired by God's Spirit; it is his Word; it communicates because it contains within itself the truths of the faith: God the Trinity, the incarnation of his Word, the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Carol Harrison, “The Reception of the Bible in the Post-New Testament Period: Augustine,” in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. James Carleton Paget and Joachim Shaper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 687. Thus, even if *sermo* does not equate to *Verbum*, in the unique case of the Scriptural proclamation of Christ they are inseparably and intimately united.

he clearly and explicitly affirms that it is participation in Christ which makes believers into gods and this underscores the necessary doctrine of the deity of Christ.<sup>99</sup> Finally, he here characterizes the divine believers as enlightened light and as warmed by saving fire. One may posit that the key Augustinian virtues of faith (which Augustine elsewhere associates with light) and love (elsewhere associated with fire) stand in the near background as the chief characteristics of the deified.

This impulse to illustrate and affirm the characteristics of the deified believer already in this life derives from Augustine's pastoral concern to exhort his hearers to Christian virtues. He depicts the present "gods" as those Christians who have been illuminated with God's truth;<sup>100</sup> who manifest love for God, for one another, and even for their enemies;<sup>101</sup> who speak the truth,<sup>102</sup> especially in confessing Christ,<sup>103</sup> and remain faithful to that confession even to death;<sup>104</sup> who, in general, think the thoughts of God and live according to God.<sup>105</sup> To be without this God-given transformation of human life means to remain "merely human," still bound to greed and other evil passions.<sup>106</sup> Like Origen, Augustine can also point to the common mortality of humanity as

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<sup>99</sup> The pseudo-Augustinian text of the fifth century, *Solutiones diversarum questionum*, likewise employs Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in a classic defense of the deity of Christ, noting that as God he is the unique Son by nature, in contrast to the creaturely sons adopted by grace. *Solutiones div. quaest.* 1.

<sup>100</sup> Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Io.* 65.1; *Enarr. Ps.* 95 (LXX 94).6; *Enarr. Ps.* 50 (LXX 49).2.

<sup>101</sup> Augustine, *Adim.* 1.5.2.

<sup>102</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 166.2.

<sup>103</sup> Augustine, *Enarr. Ps.* 116 (LXX 115).3–9.

<sup>104</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 81.6.

<sup>105</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 76; *Serm.* 97.2. Athanasius also speaks of living "according to God," *Inc.* 4.6.8. Both are echoing 1 Pet. 4:6: ". . . they might live in the spirit the way God does (κατὰ θεόν)" (ESV). The phrase also appears in Eph. 4:24 with reference to the restoration of the image of God in humanity. (Ps.-)Basil, *Spir.* 191.1, writes of the Spirit enabling the believers to "live divinely" as gods (ζῆν ποιεῖ θείως; Henry, *Études plotiniennes I*, 192).

<sup>106</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 107.3. Augustine, following a line of argumentation which references Ps. 116:2 (LXX 115:2; "every human being is a liar") and 1 Cor. 3:3–4 (where Paul labels jealousy and strife as "human" activities), joins those other Fathers who equate natural humanity with sinful behavior. The tradition traces from Origen.

an indication of a common punishment for a common sinful condition. This becomes a call to humble oneself before God.<sup>107</sup>

Largely missing from Augustine is any identification of “gods” as priests or leaders or judges in particular. These identifications, derived from the historical and textual context of the psalm, appear occasionally among some of the eastern Fathers.<sup>108</sup> Augustine’s spirituality focuses on the transforming experience of the individual in the communion of the church; hence, he does not relate the title “gods” to a specific status in the hierarchy within the church or to a specific elite rank of spirituality. Only at one point—when he identifies John the Evangelist as a “god” on account of his uniquely superhuman vision of the deity of Christ<sup>109</sup>—does Augustine appear to break this rule. Still, even this application of the psalm to a specific individual does not arise from any attention to the original historical referent of the psalm.

In a few passages Augustine will acknowledge the Old Testament context of the psalm in order to explain that the people of Israel had also been named God’s children and could have retained that status, had they obeyed the law and not fallen to pride (particularly in their failure to recognize the Christ among them).<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, Augustine can also, at least in a couple instances, refer the psalm to its eschatological fulfillment in God’s glorified people when as “gods” they will know Christ fully as God and, raised to a status equal to angels, see God the Holy Trinity.<sup>111</sup> He joins many Fathers before him in seeing that the gift of “deity” corresponds to

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<sup>107</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 97.2.

<sup>108</sup> Eusebius exemplifies this in his commentary on Psalm 82 (LXX 81), where he observes both that the rebuke of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) focuses the rebuke at the close of Psalm 80 and that the psalm addresses the leaders of God’s Old Testament people in particular. *Comm. Ps.* 82 (LXX 81; PG 23:981).

<sup>109</sup> Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1.4.

<sup>110</sup> Augustine, *Serm. Dom.* 2.4.15; *Enarr. Ps.* 82 (LXX 81).1.

<sup>111</sup> Augustine, *Enarr. Ps.* 85 (LXX 84).9; *Serm.* 229G.3. Augustine addresses the question of how the physical eyes of the resurrected will require transformation in order to see God in *Civ.* 22.29.

the gift of immortality.<sup>112</sup>

Explaining “gods” in the Old Testament text, describing the unique deity of the Son of God, highlighting the virtues of the deified believers, affirming sonship in ancient Israel, and anticipating the glorification of the believer—all of Augustine’s categories of employing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) have precedents in the tradition. The “gods” are even now baptized believers who participate in Christ and whose lives demonstrate the effect of that union—or at least they ought to. By grace and adoption, they are God’s children. Equating divinization with filiation, Augustine pairs Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) most frequently (seven times) with John 1:12, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God.”<sup>113</sup> In all of this, Augustine sees applications for the psalm for Christians both as they live for Christ in this world and as they hope for the glory to come in the next when the full benefits of being children of God will be realized.

### Conclusions

This set of church leaders from the late fourth to early fifth century largely employed Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for communicating the effects of salvation in Christ and exhorting God’s people to live faithful to their calling. Citing the passage to teach the unique deity of Christ, although still present for some, has definitely waned. Basil and Faustinus develop the Christological application of the Psalm towards a pneumatological one, supporting the deity of the Spirit. The more pressing concern, however, is how to live as a Christian, both in one’s

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<sup>112</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 360B; *Tract. Ep. Jo.* 2.14. Like Athanasius, Augustine accounts for creation’s natural vulnerability to mortality by its origin *ex nihilo*. Sumruld, *Augustine and the Arians*, 108.

<sup>113</sup> Augustine alone accounts for nearly half of the patristic citations of John 1:12 which appear in conjunction with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6).

private life and in community with the church. The psalm can be read as speaking of the role of bishops and leaders as well as the gift of baptism and, most typically, the call to live a virtuous life, whether under specific ascetic vows or not.<sup>114</sup> The Cappadocian usage of the psalm also reflects an invitation to educated pagans to open themselves to the promise of Christian spirituality. The pastoral usage of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for practical application has come to its zenith. The Christological controversies already nascent, however, are soon to appear fully on the horizon.

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<sup>114</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, who does not formally cite Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), nevertheless describes the pastoral task as an art “to provide the soul with wings. . . in short, to deify and bestow heavenly bliss upon one who belongs to the heavenly host” (*Or.* 2.22); he asks regarding worthy priests: “Who can. . . be god and make others to be god?” (*Or.* 2.73). Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 9, 24. It takes divinely virtuous priests to make divinely virtuous Christians.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE SON AND THE “SONS”—PSALM 82:6 IN THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES

Moving further into the fifth century, the appearance of Cyril of Alexandria and the first phase of the Christological controversy over Nestorius’s propositions in the late 420s lead to an emphatic Christological employment of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). The remainder of the century, however, while continuing to offer examples of such a usage, also balances it with pastoral representations of the spiritual ascent of humanity and further instruction on the role of bishops, judges, and rulers. Theodoret of Cyr illustrates this last usage. Individual authors are clearly free to interpret the psalm with an eye to the spiritual needs they deem most pressing for their audience.

#### Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus

The younger contemporary of Augustine and Jerome and the powerful bishop of Alexandria, Cyril (*fl.* 412–444) emerges as another major figure in the employment of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). He is particularly known for his staunch defense of the unity of Christ, a fight begun with Nestorius in 429 over the title “Theotokos” for Mary and setting Cyril in opposition to many who had been taught by the influential teachers at Antioch.<sup>1</sup> Even before he became a chief combatant in the Christological debates, his early exegetical and doctrinal texts demonstrate that he turns to the psalm repeatedly to teach the unique incarnate deity of Christ. Wanting to guard against any impression that he himself failed to confess the full humanity of Christ, he rarely employs the terms for deification (theosis, theopoiesis); rather, he appeals to 2

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<sup>1</sup> BBKL, “Cyrill von Alexandrien,” 1990, OCLC.org.

Pet. 1:4 in order to assert that human beings become “partakers in the divine nature.”<sup>2</sup> In the end, we may summarize his pastoral employment of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) under three headings: (1) the uses of the title “god” for humanity; (2) contexts which affirm the unique Sonship and deity of Christ; and (3) passages which depict the sanctifying work of the Word among humanity.<sup>3</sup> In every instance, Cyril reflects his own self-understanding as the chief teacher and defender of the faith in the see of Alexandria for the service of the church at large.<sup>4</sup>

### Various Uses of “God” for Humanity

Cyril’s first usage of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) occurs in his biblical commentaries which pre-date the Christological controversy which broke out with Nestorius. We first turn to the *Expositio in Psalmos* (written either shortly after 412 or 423–425),<sup>5</sup> where Cyril presents what had become the classic position of the multivalence of the term “god.”<sup>6</sup> It may be used for the true God or for false gods in a spurious fashion, but also for those who have a share in grace from Another. As for the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), they are those elevated to the

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<sup>2</sup> “With Cyril, 2 Pet. 1:4 comes to the fore; the text is quoted more frequently by him than by any other Greek ecclesiastical writer.” Norman Russell, “‘Partakers of the Divine Nature’ (2 Pet. 1:4) in the Byzantine Tradition,” Myriobiblos Library (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1998), [www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/Russell\\_partakers.html#29](http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/Russell_partakers.html#29).

<sup>3</sup> These categories parallel the ones used to organize the material of the early to mid-fourth century, demonstrating the continuity in the psalm’s utility.

<sup>4</sup> “Défenseur passionné de l’unité du Verbe Incarné, Cyrille d’Alexandrie est avant tout un pasteur qui, inlassablement commente l’Écriture, à la lumière du Christ.” Emmanuel Hirschauer, “L’exégèse Cyrillienne Du Psaume 94,” *Vetera Christianorum* 41 (2004): 83.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars debate the dating of the text, though all agree it was before the controversy with Nestorius. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3 (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1963), 125. The authenticity of the authorship of the psalm commentary is also suspect, as Hirschauer observes. Hirschauer, “L’exégèse Cyrillienne Du Psaume 94,” 84–85. His process, to compare the exegesis and theology of a set of comments on a psalm with known Cyrilian works, inclines us to include the *Exp. Ps. 82* (LXX 81; PG 69:1204) among the authentic texts. As primary evidence, the conclusions of the psalm commentary accord with those of Cyril’s *Commentary on John* and *De sancta Trinitate dialogi* in this study.

<sup>6</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Exp. Ps. 82* (LXX 81; PG 69:1204).

priesthood. Cyril draws this conclusion from an intertextual observation. In Acts 23:5, Paul applies to the high priest the second half of Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), “You will not malign gods *nor will you speak wickedly of a ruler of your people*” (LXX). Thus, by reading the line as a synonymous parallelism, Cyril deems that the Scriptures themselves identify the “gods” as the rulers whom Paul recognizes as the priests.<sup>7</sup> In this, Cyril stands in accord with Theodore of Mopsuestia, who also took the “gods” to be the temple priests.

Two other early texts which cite Psalm 82 (LXX 81) address the ways human beings may be called gods and, more than that, surpass the limits of humanity. Reading Zeph. 1:3 (“I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth,’ declares the Lord,” ESV) in his commentary on the minor prophets (another work before the Nestorian controversy, but difficult to date), Cyril explains that, while sinful human beings who “live according to the flesh” must die, God’s holy ones are “no longer mortal” but “spiritual and divine,” having their “citizenship in heaven.”<sup>8</sup> His dichotomy of humanity and divinity as a cypher for flesh and spirit recalls the insights of the great Alexandrians before him, Clement and Origen.<sup>9</sup>

Even more boldly, in the *Glaphyra in Pentateuchem* (written shortly after his ascension to the episcopacy), Cyril draws on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) when explaining Gen. 4:26 where he reads that Enoch “hoped to be called by the name of the Lord his God” (a reading permitted by the grammar of the LXX translation).<sup>10</sup> Cyril describes a social context in which the saintly man, so “admired for the splendor of his piety,” would be called “god” by those who wished to give him

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<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Cyril in another context follows Origen in reading Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) as a reference to pagan gods who have “stolen the name of divinity.” Cyril, *Comm. Jo.* on 19:7 (Maxwell, 2:336).

<sup>8</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. xii prophetas minores*, on Zeph. 1:2–3.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, the association of divinization with immortality originates further back with Irenaeus.

<sup>10</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra in Pentateuchem* (PG 69:48, 24). The dating is discussed in Quasten, *Patrology*, 3:121.

the highest honor.<sup>11</sup> Cyril does not reprove this honor granted to Enoch; rather he compares it positively to the experience of Christians who, adopted by their Maker to become brothers of Christ, “live in the hope of a glory that transcends our human estate” (ὕπερ ἄνθρωπον). By God’s grace and love for humankind, the coming of Christ grants this transcendent glory, as the psalm verse testifies.

Cyril seeks to balance the gift of the divine title granted to Christians with the recognition of the limits of human nature. In his *Commentary on John* at 1:12, he observes that those who “become children of God” do so by grace, adoption, and the restoring of the image, as they are called to things “beyond nature,” however, they never become Sons by nature as the Son alone is.<sup>12</sup> They do receive “all the riches of his tranquility and glory.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly and from about the same time period right before the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy,<sup>14</sup> Cyril’s *Dialogues on the Holy Trinity* observes that, though the (Arian) opponents may use Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to demote the Son of God, the Son remains uniquely from the Father, not from earth. Exalted terms<sup>15</sup> do not make human beings gods by nature nor do humble terms demote the Son’s divinity, “for each remains in his own nature” (μένει γὰρ ἕκαστον ἐν ἰδίᾳ φύσει) and the entities

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<sup>11</sup> The imagined situation suggests the euhemeristic theory of the origin of polytheism: exceptional human beings were called gods as their fame waxed. The reader may recall that Ammonius also presumed this reaction among the pagans.

<sup>12</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Jo.* on John 1:12. David Maxwell explains Cyril’s language of transcending nature as a function of his protology: Adam was originally created to receive life from God’s Spirit, which makes the original state of humanity “super-natural.” David R. Maxwell, “Justification in the Early Church,” *Concordia Journal* 44, no. 3 (2018): 32.

<sup>13</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, trans. David R. Maxwell, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 64. The original Greek comment on John 1:14 is located at Pusey 1:141.

<sup>14</sup> Norman Russell posits that the *Dial. Trin.* and *Comm. Jo.* were written close to one another at the end of the period just before the outbreak of the controversy. Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, The Early Church Fathers Series (London: Routledge, 2000), 10.

<sup>15</sup> Cyril affirms both a kind of correspondence and an excess in language in the following expressions: “The force of a term as in an analogical sense” (ἡ τῶν λέξεων ὡς ἐν καταχρήσει δύναμις) and “mere hyperbolic expressions” (ψιλαῖς ῥηματιῶν ὑπερβολαῖς). Cyril of Alexandria, *Trin. dial. i–vii*, Aubert 520.

of the realm of becoming cannot transgress the boundary of ultimate being.<sup>16</sup> Humanity, even if “beyond nature,” does not attain to the nature of God. Cyril maintains the Creator-creature divide, an essential part of his worldview which he finds revealed clearly in the Scriptures and supported by the philosophical premises of his day.

In 431, in the press of the Council of Ephesus, Cyril again grants that those who come to please God and are united to him “by nature” (an allusion to 2 Pet. 1:4) are his children already in this world. Nevertheless, on the basis of Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7), they experience mortality because “we subject our own mind to the passions of the flesh.”<sup>17</sup> Cyril thus comes to qualify the glorification of humanity in this world.

Later yet (439–441), in *Against Julian*, Cyril speaks of human beings as possessing but the “mere title” (γυμνη κλήσει) of god. He explains that Christians, by God’s grace, may be called “gods” in that they come to conform to the image of the Son.<sup>18</sup> Yet, countering the polytheism advocated by the pro-pagan Emperor Julian, Cyril provides multiple safeguards against any potential misunderstanding of his position. By God’s creation, rational beings made in the likeness of their Creator may be honored with the title of “god,” just as we name a painting a “man” by the likeness it possesses.<sup>19</sup> In his own nature, God “alone is exalted on high with incomparable perfections of the intellect and beyond all intellect and self-sustaining (αὐτοφουᾶ) and uncreated (ἀγέννητον),” whereas all else comes into existence from non-existence by God’s

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<sup>16</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Trin. dial. i–vii*, Aubert 520, 4 and 33–34.

<sup>17</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Nestorius* (ACO 1.1.5.30, 19).

<sup>18</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *C. Jul.* 9.4, 17–18.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle employs the same image of a man and a painting to illustrate homonymy. Aristotle, *Cat.* 1.1a1–2. See also Ward, *Aristotle on Homonymy*, 13.

creative power.<sup>20</sup> By God’s grace, other beings (rational creatures, angels, humanity) may be *called* gods, but only the Son is God by nature as one who is co-existent with the Father.<sup>21</sup> By this point and in this apologetic context, like Origen’s *Contra Celsum* and Augustine’s *City of God*, Cyril has left off any discussion of humanity surpassing its own nature when in conversation with paganism, which remained a credible threat to Christianity despite the turn of imperial policy against it.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, he asks rhetorically: “Then will we who have been honored to be called gods and so possess the treasures of his kindness be ignorant of the measure of our own nature?”<sup>23</sup> He clearly aligns himself with Basil, who deemed the thought of attaining natural equivalence with God “madness.”

#### The Distinct Meaning of “God” for the Son

By far, Cyril’s most frequent recourse to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) occurs in contexts in which he is defending the deity of Christ as the incarnate Word. In this connection, the passage appears eight times in the *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, three times in the *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, five times in the *Commentary on John*, and then seven times in the writings against Nestorius included in the acts of the Council of Ephesus.<sup>24</sup> The argumentation in these many sources coheres in the consistency of Cyril’s Christology.

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<sup>20</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *C. Jul.* 8.5, 3–10.

<sup>21</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *C. Jul.* 9.3, 16–9.4, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Louth, “Cyril of Alexandria,” in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances M. Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 355.

<sup>23</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *C. Jul.* 8.5, 12–14. Already in the *Comm. Jo.*, Cyril can oppose those who would say that Christians are “light” in the same way that the Son is the Light with the observation: “May it never be! When the Son is in a position, he is in it unchangeably. But we are placed into sonship, and we are gods by grace. We are not ignorant of what we are.” *Comm. Jo.* on John 1:9 (Pusey 1:110, Maxwell 1:49).

<sup>24</sup> We follow here Normal Russell’s proposed ordering of the early material of Cyril. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 10. In this connection, one observes that the spurious *Dialogus cum Nestorio* (PG 76:249, 17) cites Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) as an example of Nestorius’s deficient Christology in its supposition that the man Christ is called “god” just as any saint might be.

In the *Thesaurus*, Cyril details a position already familiar from other Fathers. He depicts the Sonship of Christ as one who is eternally and naturally begotten.<sup>25</sup> Thus, he is the unchanging, natural, and essential Son and God.<sup>26</sup> This contrasts with the human creatures who become sons only by grace,<sup>27</sup> by adoption,<sup>28</sup> by participation in God through the Spirit.<sup>29</sup> They are made after the image; He is the Image.<sup>30</sup> Reminiscent of Tertullian two centuries before, Cyril juxtaposes the Son by nature and the sons by grace. Following the line of thought which traces back to Origen, Cyril teaches that John 10:35–36 identifies Christ as the Word who comes to human beings to make them prophets and thus he must surpass the prophets.<sup>31</sup> With logic which recalls Irenaeus, Cyril also distinguishes different senses for the title “G/god,” which only improperly and loosely (καταχρηστικῶς) applies to creatures as they participate in him.<sup>32</sup> Even Cyril’s note that participation in God takes place through the Holy Spirit has a precedent in the works of Eusebius.<sup>33</sup>

Not surprisingly, Cyril basically rehearses the same points from Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, a work of about the same time and on the same topic.<sup>34</sup> In the

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<sup>25</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:45).

<sup>26</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:125, 217, 540, 556).

<sup>27</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:189, 540).

<sup>28</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:217, 540, 556).

<sup>29</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:45, 217, 217, 325).

<sup>30</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:189). Thus they are named “sons” and “gods” in imitation of him (κατὰ μίμησιν). Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:540).

<sup>31</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:317).

<sup>32</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:325).

<sup>33</sup> See Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* on Ps. 84:8 (LXX 83:9; PG 23:1013).

<sup>34</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Trin. Dial* (Aubert 414, 488, 498, 520).

*Commentary on John* (425–428),<sup>35</sup> John 1 naturally affirms the unique status of the Word as the Creator;<sup>36</sup> Cyril also reiterates that the Word, who is far more than a prophet, makes others into prophets by his coming to them.<sup>37</sup>

In both of these pro-Nicene works, Cyril reacts against an anti-Nicene reading of John 10 which would assert that Christ is merely claiming the type of attributive “divinity” which God grants to his creatures. Rather, by making Christ instrumental in their “divinity,” Cyril elevates Christ as the one in whom the gods participate and, consequently, uniquely true God himself. The Platonic concept of participation does not allow for characteristics or titles to be transferred through multiple intermediaries. Only direct participation in God himself grants the title and characteristic of divinity. Christ, the Word whose coming makes others divine, must be God.

Yet more details regarding Christ’s unique Sonship appear in the *Five Tomes against Nestorius* which were written into the minutes at the Council of Ephesus. Cyril opposes any thought that the sonship of the “sons of the Most High” demotes the unchanging, natural, essential, unique Sonship of the divine Son.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the One who is Son by nature, others are merely “called” sons.<sup>39</sup> Cyril contrasts the title given to Moses as “god” with the title which Christ possesses:

But would anyone wish to say that Christ is God in the same way as that great man Moses, who was honored by the naming of God (ὡς τῆ τοῦ θεοῦ κλήσει) according to that common word spoken by God to us by his grace and generosity: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6)? But isn’t this madness and the empty spewing of an ignorant mind? As I said, he has been honored by a mere

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<sup>35</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 96.

<sup>36</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Jo.* (Pusey 1:67). Thus the created “gods” are so only by grace.

<sup>37</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Jo.* (Pusey 1:67, 110, 133, 250; 3:68).

<sup>38</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanation of the Twelve Chapters* (ACO 1.1.5.21); *Against Nestorius* (ACO 1.1.6.92; 1.1.7.30).

<sup>39</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Nestorius* (ACO 1.1.6.65).

naming alone (ψιλῆ καὶ μόνη τετίμηται κλήσει) according to the nature by which he is a human being, but [the Son] is also truly God. For the Word was God in human form of his own nature, having an untarnished superiority over all. For the divine nature could not be diminished to be less just because he accommodates himself to share in flesh and blood (Cf., Heb. 2:14).<sup>40</sup>

Cyril concludes the argument by noting that the human Christ displayed divine omniscience in his ability to read the thoughts of his adversaries (John 2:23–25). This stands out as a distinguishing attribute of God.

We may conclude this section with the observation that this is the chief value of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) for Cyril: to contrast the unique Sonship of the Son with the derivative sonship of the sons of God. His pastoral concern is to teach Christ clearly so that others may know him and his salvation. For Cyril, who received his single-subject Christology from Athanasius, this meant a salvation authored by the Son who was truly a Son and therefore in a position to bring others into the intimacy of fellowship in the life of the Holy Trinity by sharing his very self through his own flesh and blood.<sup>41</sup>

#### The Significance of Christ's Deity for the Sanctification of Humanity

Cyril's treatment of how the deity of Christ relates to the glorification of humanity will be familiar by now. Participation in the Son makes others sons. Only a fully divine and eternal Son can make others to become gods.<sup>42</sup> Christ's coming into the flesh takes the poverty of humanity and gives in exchange the glory of his divinity.

Is it not therefore perfectly clear to all that he came down into that which was in slavery, not to do anything for himself but to give himself to us “that by his poverty, we might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9) and that we might ascend by likeness with him to

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<sup>40</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Nestorius* (ACO 1.1.6.39).

<sup>41</sup> Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 26–27, 103; Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 45.

<sup>42</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Trin. dial.* 488.

his own exceptional dignity and be shown to be gods and children of God through faith? He who is by nature Son and God “dwelt in us.” Therefore, in his Spirit “we cry Abba! Father!” (Rom. 8:15). The Word dwells in the one temple, taken from us and for us, as he dwells in all people, so that having everyone in himself he might reconcile everyone in one body with the Father, as Paul says (Eph. 2:16, 18).<sup>43</sup>

Cyril combines here the reality of the incarnation and its very real consequences for the status of humanity before God with the necessity of faith and the gift of the indwelling Spirit. Christ comes not only to humanity as a whole but to the individual to conform each to his image by his grace.<sup>44</sup> They then receive freedom from death and sin and entrance into a new, incorruptible life.<sup>45</sup>

We must add one final caveat to Cyril’s position. In at least one passage, he suggests a kind of “now/not yet” tension of the reality of the adopted sonship enjoyed by those who must yet die in their mortality. He is commenting on how Christ’s incarnation has destroyed the power of death (Heb. 2:14–15):

For even if we are being called gods, we are nevertheless reminded of the measure of our weakness: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6) is followed immediately by “but you are dying as human beings” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). For it is clear that we have come to be addressed this way by grace (κατὰ χάριν).<sup>46</sup>

Cyril grants both realities: Christians are even now children of the Most High and yet remain mortal as a consequence of their fleshly nature.<sup>47</sup> Finally, it is grace alone which resolves the tension that those not yet perfect (and therefore not yet immortal) may nevertheless be

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<sup>43</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Nestorius* (ACO 1.1.6.39).

<sup>44</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *C. Jul.* 9.4.

<sup>45</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Nestorius* (ACO 1.1.6.65).

<sup>46</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Nestorius* (ACO 1.1.7.30).

<sup>47</sup> A similar passage occurs in Cyril, *Against Nestorius* ACO 1.1.5.30, but speaking of the death which comes to those who fall away from God: “For all of us who have come to please God and to the kindness which unites to him by nature are [his] children and no one would have fallen away from fellowship with him (τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν οικειότητος), except for what David says: we die ‘as human beings,’ we fall ‘as one of the rulers,’ since we subject our own mind to the passions of the flesh.”

acknowledged to be God’s children even in their present weaknesses. Cyril’s usage of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and its thrilling language of humanity becoming gods does remain grounded in the reality of the human condition, saved by Christ but also awaiting its eschatological fulfillment.

### **Mid-Fifth-Century Authors with Few Citations of Psalm 82**

Next in this chronological survey come eleven citations of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) scattered sparsely among seven authors and texts: the *Collectio Veronensis: Contra Iudaeos*, John Cassian (ca. 360–435), Nonnus of Panopolis (mid-5<sup>th</sup> century), Isidore of Pelusium (ca. 365– ca. 435), Peter Chrysologus (fl. 433–450), the texts that come under the name of Hesychius, and Arnobius the Younger (fl. ca. 450–460). We briefly present this evidence under three themes: the unique deity of Christ, the distinct character of the human “gods,” and reading multiple referents in the psalm.

The *Contra Iudaeos* represents our first and only direct example of an Arian allusion to Psalm 82 (LXX 81).<sup>48</sup> It presents its Arian commitments subtly enough that it passed through many centuries presumed to have been authored by St. Maximus of Turin. Indeed, much of its argumentation about the deity of Christ rings familiar with what we have uncovered thus far. After citing John 10:34–38, the author turns to Ps. 2:7 and 110:3 (LXX 109:3) about the begetting of the Son and then explains that God begets as only God does—“impassibly, incorruptibly, and ineffably” (*deifice*—in the manner of God).<sup>49</sup> Various unique divine titles accrue to the begotten Son: “The Lord begat a Lord; Light, Light; Splendor, Splendor; Power,

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<sup>48</sup> *Collectio Veronensis: Contra Iudaeos* 13. One might observe, however, that *Const. ap.* has been described as a “semi-Arian” text. However, that non-Christological use of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), to defend the dignity of bishops, did not relate to any distinctly Arian position.

<sup>49</sup> *C. Iud.* 13.3

Power; the King, a King; the One, a One; the Only, an Only; the Eternal, an Eternal; Strength, Strength; the Creator, a Creator.”<sup>50</sup> Finally, Isa. 53:8 (*Generationem ejus quis enarrabit?*) verifies his ineffable begetting. In sum, the author shows no interest in how human beings may be called or become gods, even though he cites John 10.<sup>51</sup> The focus in his dialogue with Judaism is to extol the unique Sonship of Christ who is ineffably begotten by the Father. He suggests that the characteristics and titles he confesses about the Son are uniquely his, possessed by none other.

John Cassian, the devout ascetic who so effectively promoted monastic life in the west, and Isidore of Pelusium, also an ascetic whose learned letters taught Christian virtues and proper exegesis, both wield Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to defend Christ’s deity. Cassian contrasts the title of god given to creatures as a gift of adoption through God’s declaration (“I have said...”) with Christ’s title of “blessed God over all forever” (Rom. 9:5), which indicates “the truth and property of his nature” (*veritas proprietatesque naturae*).<sup>52</sup> Isidore (*Ep.* 31) aims to explain how Christ is the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος) of creation.<sup>53</sup> He takes recourse to the near homophone, differing only by accent, which would make Christ the “first begetter” (πρωτοτόκος) of creation.<sup>54</sup> Appealing to Deut. 32:18, Isa. 1:2, and Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), he argues that creation is a kind of child of God, though through a process that is appropriate to God (θεοπρεπῶς). Although he is arguing principally for the unique divine status of the Son, Isidore ends up

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<sup>50</sup> *C. Iud.* 13.3

<sup>51</sup> He thus follows the example of Cyprian, one of his sources, per Houghton, *Latin New Testament*, 54.

<sup>52</sup> John Cassian, *Inc. Dom.* 3.2.262, 22 (CSEL 17.263). For further elaboration of Cassian’s differentiation between the Sonship of Christ and the sonship of Christians, see *Inc. Dom.* 5.4. and Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 178.

<sup>53</sup> Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 3.31, 22 (PG 78, TLG).

<sup>54</sup> Isidore’s correspondence demonstrates how he combines his interests in Greek literature, philosophy, Christian literature, grammar and philology with pastoral care. As Ursula Treu observes, he was a multi-faceted individual: “He is not first of all a theologian, but more a parish priest, who has always to care for his sheep: but this function alone cannot give a true picture of him.” Ursula Treu, “Isidore of Pelusium and the Grammaticus Ophelius,” ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997): 376.

positing that all creatures may be described as God’s children, without consideration of the specifics of the psalm. This is the broadest possible application of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), one which extends beyond the scope of saints and angels, beyond believers, beyond demons, even beyond animals to embrace even the inanimate order of creation. Isidore apparently does not consider how this use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) would also grant every created being not only the title “child” but “god” as well.

John Cassian also witnesses to how Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) depicts the character of the human beings who become “gods.” Commenting on Gen. 6:1–4, Cassian takes Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as a direct reference to the “sons of god” who abandoned “the true discipline of natural philosophy (*physicae philosophiae disciplina*, i.e., the study of nature which we might call science today) which was handed down to them by their forbearers” beginning with Adam, giving it up on account of the enticements of the “daughters of human beings.”<sup>55</sup> This unique reading makes the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) not simply the godly but a godly clan immersed in the natural sciences, set apart from others by their knowledge of the natural order.<sup>56</sup>

Further details about the Christian “gods” are fleshed out by Isidore of Pelusium, together with Peter Chrysologus and Ps.-Hesychius, the unknown author of the *Commentarius brevis*.<sup>57</sup> They present standard readings which identify the “gods” with those led by the Lord in the way

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<sup>55</sup> John Cassian, *Conlationes* 8.21.238, 14 (John Cassian, *John Cassian: The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers 57 [New York: Paulist Press, 1997], 305).

<sup>56</sup> The idea that ancient personages named in the Bible had a mastery of the natural sciences developed already before the rise of Christianity as a Jewish apologetic in response to the prestige of Hellenistic learning. Kaiser, *Creational Theology*, 14.

<sup>57</sup> The biography of Chrysoslogus is also uncertain but his fame as a preacher is confirmed from his extant works. BBKL, s.v. “Chrysologus,” 1990, OCLC.org.

of life,<sup>58</sup> who have a heavenly, spiritual nature.<sup>59</sup> Isidore contrasts “all human beings” and the few who “attain a greater dignity,” who “are drawn up to the best way of life” and “transcend their existence as human beings” (τῶν ὑπερβεβηκότων τὸ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι).<sup>60</sup> As a pastor but especially as an ascetic, Isidore thus echoes the tradition which identifies the human condition with fallibility, even with sinfulness, and describes those who have been delivered from this condition as, in a way, having left their humanity to become gods. The psalm passage thus verifies the possibility of such transcendence. In a similar vein, Peter Chrysologus, exhorting his hearers to live worthy of their identity in Christ, reminds them of God’s grace in elevating them to a “heavenly nature.”<sup>61</sup>

The poet Nonnus wrote both a hexameter epic on Dionysius and a paraphrase on the Gospel of John, leading some to conclude that a conversion to Christianity took place between the works and others to posit that he held to a universal concept of God which embraces both kinds of religious expression.<sup>62</sup> His John paraphrase has also received alternative interpretations. Some read it as a triumphant proclamation of the Gospel in a classical mode (meant for Christians); others see its purpose to evangelize non-Christians by the attention it garners from its startling literary form.<sup>63</sup> As for its understanding of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), it retains, perhaps exaggerates, the merely nominal sense of calling human beings gods. His verse has been

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<sup>58</sup> Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 3.237, 23 (PG 78, TLG).

<sup>59</sup> Peter Chrysologus, *Collectio Sermonum*, *Serm.* 10, 22 (CCSL 24); (Ps.-)Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Comm. brevis*, Ps. 50 (LXX 49).1, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 3.237, 20 (PG 78, TLG).

<sup>61</sup> Peter Chrysologus, *Serm.* 10 (CCSL 24, 53).

<sup>62</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Nonnos,” 1990, OCLC.org. Efforts to define precisely the temporal location of Nonnus suffer from a lack of evidence. One may safely posit that his life fell between the close of the fourth century and the middle of the sixth. Thomas A. Schmitz, “Nonnus and His Tradition,” in *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 173.

<sup>63</sup> Schmitz, 188–89.

rendered in English: “If earthly men to whom the word of God came merely as a dream, the psalmist, in your books of laws called humans gods, . . . how can you complain my words to be an insane boast that, of the living God, I might yet be the Son.”<sup>64</sup> In the spirit of the Gospel text, Nonnus desires to emphasize the unique divine status of the Jesus. With this as his focus, the human “gods” remain quite human, only called “gods” and only on the basis of an ephemeral dream which constituted an encounter with the Word of God.

What remains to this period are two relatively sophisticated commentaries on Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Also coming to us under the name of Hesychius is the *Commentarius in Ps. 77–99*, which reads the psalm contextually as referring to rulers.<sup>65</sup> First the text refers to rulers in Israel—prophetic, priestly, and military. Then it is made to apply to all of humanity, for Adam, made in God’s image and likeness, had been given authority to rule over creation (Gen. 1:26). Even the devil, the paradigmatic fallen transgressor of Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7), fell from a place of ruling over other angels. Being a “god,” then, belonged to humanity at the beginning of creation as a gift of authority to be exercised with the justice of God. The title was honorific and functional.

Arnobius the Younger, one of the most important Italian Christians of his day, wrote an allegorizing commentary on the Psalms from a semi-Pelagian perspective which consciously opposed Augustine’s teaching on predestination.<sup>66</sup> Like the *Commentarius*, he builds his approach to Psalm 82 (LXX 81) on humanity as made in the image of God.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the human creature may at times be called by names which are proper to God alone—“god,” “lord,” “holy,”

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<sup>64</sup> Nonnos, *Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John*, trans. M. A. Prost (San Diego: Writing Shop Press, 2002), 128. The translation has been slightly modified.

<sup>65</sup> (Ps.-)Hesychius, *Comm. Ps. 77–99* (PG 55:732, 29).

<sup>66</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Arnobius der Jüngere,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>67</sup> Arnobius the Younger, *Comm. Ps. 81*, 11.

and “good” being the examples of such derivative and honorific titles. Also with Arnobius, judicial authority corresponds to the title “god,” but he specifically applies the text to the enemies of Christ who misjudged the Lord who had come to heal them.

These authors, living within the context of the Christological controversies, show how employments of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to defend the unique deity of Christ can function in conjunction with other pastoral applications of the text. We find them, while teaching Christians the nature of Christ, using the psalm to build the motivation for a Christian way of life and to communicate a proper grasp of salvation history (creation-fall-redemption-transformation). Even the connections made between the “gods” and judges or rulers suggest that proper human authority is exercised with self-control and discernment of the truth. This variegated pattern continues through this century.

### **Theodoret**

Himself caught up in the conflict between Cyril and Nestorius, Theodoret of Cyr (*ca.* 393–458) produced not only polemical and reconciling efforts for that conflict but also a wide range of apologetic and exegetical volumes.<sup>68</sup> Following Diodore and Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Antiochene tradition, he arises as a significant commentator on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), with no less than twelve references to the psalm verse. At the same time, his interpretations fall fully in line with those of his contemporaries just reviewed, the author of the *Commentarius* and Arnobius the Younger. Like them, he sees uniquely divine titles graciously granted to humanity as honorific (along with “god,” he lists the examples “blessed” and “faithful”).<sup>69</sup> He also links the

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<sup>68</sup> BBKL, s.v., “Theodoret von Kyros,” 1996, OCLC.org.

<sup>69</sup> Theodoret, *Interp. Ps.*, Ps. 1 (PG 80:868, 18), *Ep.* 147, 211 and 244.

title of “god” with the exercise of God-given authority, whether by judges in the Old Testament or by judges or priests of the Christian era.<sup>70</sup> Like others of this period, the argument between Christ and his adversaries as recorded in John 10 remains an important text for the revelation of the deity of Christ.<sup>71</sup> Theodoret even cites Irenaeus directly, with his teaching that those who deny the incarnation also deny themselves the possibility to ascend to become “gods.”<sup>72</sup> Matching Augustine, Theodoret can also see in Psalm 82 (LXX 81) God’s invitation to the ancient Israelites to acknowledge themselves as his sons and respond with obedient love.<sup>73</sup> Overall, Theodoret shows himself to be a faithful worker within the tradition, particularly in its less speculative and more textually sensitive insights.

A reliable exegete, he managed to exercise his own influence over others as well. The commonalities between his teaching and those of his contemporaries demonstrates a sort of consensus in the understanding of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and its applications, although Theodoret himself particularly emphasizes the relationship between the title “god” and God-given positions of authority. For him, there is no discussion of deification (unless one counts his one citation of the words of Irenaeus) or surpassing human nature through union with Christ. Rather, as he labors in the commentary tradition, Theodoret chiefly aims to employ Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) as a teacher clarifying the biblical text, without giving significant attention to its application in the spiritual lives of his readers.

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<sup>70</sup> Theodoret, *Interp. Ps.*, (PG 80:1229 on Ps. 50, LXX 49; PG 80:1529 on 82, LXX Ps. 81; PG 80:1921 on Ps. 136, LXX 135).

<sup>71</sup> Theodoret, *Eranistes* (Etlinger 129, 32).

<sup>72</sup> Theodoret, *Eranistes* (Etlinger 98, 14).

<sup>73</sup> Theodoret, *Int. xii prophetas minores* (PG 81:1964, 35).

## Late-Fifth-Century Authors with Few Citations of Psalm 82

The late fifth century provides two more authors who are concerned with the kinds of “gods” and “sons” addressed in Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and yet another with application to rulers. *Sermon 41*, dubiously attributed to Basil of Seleucia, takes Satan’s address to Christ in the temptation scenes to mean that Satan thought of Christ as a “son of God” in the same way that believers are.<sup>74</sup> Satan’s negative example indirectly affirms Christ’s deity as the unique Son. Alternatively, Gennadius I (*fl.* 450–471), the pro-Chalcedonian patriarch of Constantinople, wants to distinguish the way that the Israelites of the Old Testament were named “sons of God” from the way that Christians are made sons by Christ and through the Spirit.<sup>75</sup> The title had some significance for Israel, but it comes to a fuller meaning for Christians.

The application of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to rulers appears in a curious report in the *Historia ecclesiastica* (*ca.* 475), once attributed to Gelasius of Cyzicus but now deemed anonymous. The author depicts Constantine standing before the assembled bishops at the Council of Nicaea. Having received various grievances from some of the bishops against others, he burned them without a reading as he charged the bishops to recognize their God-given authority to attend to the matters of the Council:

“As God has appointed you both priests and rulers to judge and discern the masses and to be gods, since you surpass the limit of all human beings,<sup>76</sup> according to what is said, ‘I said, you are gods and all sons of the Most High’ and ‘God stood in the assembly of gods,’ it is necessary to disregard ordinary affairs in order to make all

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<sup>74</sup> Ps.-Basil of Seleucia, *Serm.* 23 (PG 85:273, 41).

<sup>75</sup> Gennadius I, *Frag. Rom.* on Rom. 8:14; Moerschini and Norelli, 2:595: “Gennadius’s exegesis follows Antiochene literalism.” At the very least, one observes the typical Antiochene concerns to distinguish between the old and new covenant realities in this comment.

<sup>76</sup> ἄτε δὴ ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων ὑπερέχοντας ὀρισσάμενον. Ps.-Gelasius of Cyzicus, *Hist. eccl.* 2.8.3, 3 (Günther Christian Hansen, ed., *Anonyme Kirchengeschichte*, GCS, NS 9 [Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 2002], 42). We render ὀρισσάμενος as “limit” or “definition” here.

haste about these divine matters.”... The godly reverence of the king toward the priests of God was such that all who were of sound mind were amazed.<sup>77</sup>

“Constantine’s” citation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) (which has no parallel in Eusebius’s eye-witness account written over a century earlier, though Rufinus mentions something like it)<sup>78</sup> occurs in a scene which mirrors the psalm itself, with the emperor standing like God among the “gods” and the tasks of judgment and discernment at hand. The recognition of judges, even ecclesiastical judges and high-ranking clergy, follows patristic precedents especially since the fourth century. The emphasis on the “divinity” of the judges is all the more heightened here in that the subject matter is not “ordinary” but explicitly divine, the question of the deity of the Son. The reported response of the audience, amazed at such reverence, suggests that the language was reverential and honorific, not actually attributing divinity for the bishops. We see, however, a general acceptance of equating the “gods” with the clergy.

#### Conclusions from Cyril and the Subsequent Fifth-Century Authors

Although Cyril, both before and after the outbreak of the controversy with Nestorius, strongly emphasizes a Christological use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), other authors in this period apply the passage to their own concerns. The balance shifts, for example, with Theodoret to a strong linkage between the title “god” and the God-given authority of priests and other leaders. Only Pseudo-Hesychius retains a connection between the “gods” and non-human creatures, namely, spiritual beings over whom God rules. The variety of applications reflects a variety of

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<sup>77</sup> Ps.-Gelasius of Cyzicus, *Hist. eccl.* 2.8.3, 1–6; 2.8.4, 3–4.

<sup>78</sup> All the historians depict Constantine as opening the council with a charge to the bishops to lay aside their differences and attend to the matter of the before them. Rufinus has the emperor cite Ps. 82:1 (LXX 81:1) and Sozomen reports him reminding them that God is the ultimate judge and that he himself is “but a man.” Thus, Rufinus, producing his work in 402 or 403, lays the foundation for the usage of Ps.-Galasius (ca. 475) when his Constantine says on the basis of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), “You (bishops) have been given to us by God as gods.” Rufinus, *Hist.* 10.2. Cf., Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vit. Const.* 3.13; Socrates Scholasticus, *Eccl. hist.* 1.8.18–20; Sozomen, *Eccl. hist.* 1.17.3–6.

pastoral concerns, principally to proclaim Christ, but also to affirm God's ordained structure of authority and the spiritual exaltation of humanity in Christ. However, in this period, we find none of the vibrant paraenetic and homiletic uses which could be found in an Origen or a Chrysostom or an Augustine. The references to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) occur in the arguments within polemical discourse or the explanations within biblical commentaries. Even the monastic authors—Cassian and Isidore of Pelusium—cite the passage more for explanation than for exhortation.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW: PSALM 82:6 AT THE CLOSE OF THE ANTIQUE WORLD

All of the authors in our final collection hail from the Latin west except for Maximus the Confessor, the last figure in this study. At this point, there are no major surprises in the understanding and use of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), though new pastoral applications continue to emerge. The contours of the traditional interpretation have been set, but these provide parameters and guidelines, not rigid mandates, for the exegetes of this era.

#### Final Western Fathers

Pamphilus the Theologian (*ca.* 560–630), about whom little is known save for his clear support of Chalcedonian theology,<sup>1</sup> lays out an argument against Nestorian Christology and in so doing he demonstrates a more developed understanding of how Christians are to become “gods.”<sup>2</sup> His principal point is that those who divide the natures of Christ among two persons present a human Christ who in no way differs from a sanctified believer. This argument works for him because he has a high view of that sanctification: the saints are named “god” and “son of God” by the Spirit’s “deifying grace” (τῆς θεοποιοῦ τοῦ πνεύματος χάριτος); they receive the gift of “divine energy” (τὸ χάρισμα τῆς θείας ἐνεργείας) and “the gift of dignity” (τῆς ἀξίας τὸ δώρημα).<sup>3</sup> With the title “saint,” Pamphilus does not appear to have all believers in Christ in

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<sup>1</sup> Angelo DiBerardino et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, s.v. “Pamphilus of Jerusalem” (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Pamphilus, *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio* 9, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Pamphilus, *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio* 9, 49–52. With the mention of “dignity,” Pamphilus clearly echoes Cyril of Alexandria, whom he quotes 26 times in this work. Alois Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. Marianne Ehrhardt, vol. 2, pt. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 132.

mind but only those who have attained the highest level of sanctity.<sup>4</sup> These, in turn, serve as touchstones for orthodoxy and models of Christian life for the average Christian so that Pastor Pamphilus can point to them to authenticate Christian truth and virtue.

Isidore of Seville (d. 636), sometimes called “the last western church father,” served the church as a bishop, but also as a polymath. His integration of the sciences, grammar, history, and theology provided the foundation for the seven liberal arts through the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> At one point in his massive *Etymologies*, he principally concerns himself with explaining the unity of the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the distinct and relational names of the divine persons notwithstanding.<sup>6</sup> “Gods” in the plural refers not to the true God but to holy human beings and angels, as Psalm 82 (LXX 81) verifies. In the west, this ease of including angels in the designation of the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) stems from the influence of Augustine and Hilary before him, who himself had followed Origen in including the angels as gods.<sup>7</sup> Isidore’s other citation appears in his late work, the *Sentences*.<sup>8</sup> He juxtaposes the setting of the psalm with the narrative of Christ casting the moneychangers out of the temple to make the point that civil rulers should only be rebuked by God himself.<sup>9</sup> He thus reflects his own early medieval setting with its concern about whether and how rulers might be corrected. Interestingly, he notes that “spurious customs” (*moribus reprobis*) prohibit Christians from rebuking when they should, that

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<sup>4</sup> His own usage of the plural forms of *ἅγιος* in this document gravitate to phrases such as “the *holy* fathers” and “Blessed Cyril among the *saints*,” indicating the past theological leaders of the church whose works trace out the central streams of the tradition.

<sup>5</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Isidor,” 1990, OCLC.org.

<sup>6</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum siue Originum libri XX* 7.4.10.

<sup>7</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 4.29. Hilary appears to have read Origen in the original language, so the influence was direct. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Sent.* 3.39.4–6.

<sup>9</sup> In this case he only cites Ps. 82:1 (LXX 81:1).

is, when the ruler has deviated from the faith.<sup>10</sup>

The anonymous *Commentarius in epistulas catholicas* follows the by now familiar tack of identifying the human condition with some sinful behavior and then observing that Christians desist from that sin as they become “gods.”<sup>11</sup> The author employs this strategy in the context of James 3:8, “No human being can tame the tongue.” The human being is inherently carnal, but divine saints like Job manage to discipline their speech.

A commentary on the catholic epistles falsely attributed to Hilary of Arles is notable at this time if only because the author links Psalm 82 (LXX 81) with 2 Pet. 1:4, a relatively rare move, found previously only in Ambrosiaster and the Cyrilline documents endorsed at the Council of Ephesus.<sup>12</sup> The occasion is, naturally, a commentary on 2 Peter. Echoing the “Great Exchange” which hearkens back to Irenaeus, he writes how human beings become “partakers of the divine nature” by means of the incarnation of the Son of God: “For as God against nature became a participant in human nature, so the human being against his own nature has become a participant of the divine nature.”<sup>13</sup> The addition of the phrases “against nature” (*contra naturam*) is noteworthy here and, philosophically, a step beyond the early tradition.

The *Anonymi glossa Psalmorum ex traditione seniorum* contains six references of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). This is the first text to link this psalm to Psalm 47 (LXX 46) as it concludes in the Vulgate: “The strong gods of the earth are highly exalted” (*dii fortes terrae vehementer elevati sunt*) (Ps. 46:10).<sup>14</sup> These are the saints (*sancti*) who have been exalted through faith and

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<sup>10</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Sent.* 3.39.6.

<sup>11</sup> Scotus Anonymus, *Comm. Jac.*, 544.

<sup>12</sup> Ps.-Hilary of Arles, *Tract. Ep. Cath.*, 2 *Pet.*, 34.

<sup>13</sup> *Sicut enim deus consors factus est humanae naturae contra naturam, sic homo factus est consors diuinae naturae contra naturam.* Ps.-Hilary of Arles, *Tract. Ep. Cath.*, 2 *Pet.*, 36 (CCSL 108B, 36).

<sup>14</sup> *Glossa Psalmorum* on Ps. 47:9 (LXX 46:10; Helmut Boese, *Anonymi Glossa Psalmorum ex Traditione*

preaching (*per fidem et praedicationem*). In the same way, a brief comment on Ps. 49:1 identifies the “God of gods” as Christ among his “saints.”<sup>15</sup> Again, commenting on Ps. 95:3 (LXX 94:3), “a great king above all gods,” the *Glossa* points to those gods by grace referenced in Psalm 82 (LXX 81), but not after first taking a misstep in referencing the demonic “gods” of Ps. 96: 5 (LXX 95:5) and implying that they are the “gods by grace.” The disparate traditions of identifying the gods appear to risk becoming conflated into confusion here.

The *Glossa*’s comparatively extensive commentary on Psalm 82 (LXX 81) casts the passage as an allusion to the Son’s visitation of the Jews, nominally identified as “gods.”<sup>16</sup> His “standing” may be read as a reference to his divinity, since even in his humanity Christ does not naturally die as human beings do. Verse 6 links the psalm back to the creation and fall:

“I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), God of God, Light of Light. But they received the name “gods” as derived from God. Adam was called a son of God, that is, not by nativity but by creation as it is said, “Adam who was from God” (Luke 3:38). And all the sons of Adam would have remained as gods if he had not sinned, that is, they would have been immortal like angels who are called by this name. And in this way these sons of God were born from the son of God, Adam, which can be understood as a reference to the predestined in the church, who themselves are called sons of God not by nature but nominally (*nuncupative*), as we find in the Gospel: “As many as received him, he gave power to become sons of God, to those who believed in his name” (John 1:12).<sup>17</sup>

The “deity” of Adam and his theoretically unfallen children would consist of their immortality. Created good by God, they are designated “sons,” a status restored to the predestined through

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*Seniorum*, vol. 1 [Freiburg: Herder, 1992], 199, 5). While *dii* appears in the Vulgate, the LXX has “the powerful of the earth” (οἱ κραταιοὶ τῆς γῆς). The BHS has the ambiguous ’ēlōhîm.

<sup>15</sup> *Glossa Psalorum* on Ps. 50: 1 (LXX 49:1; Boese, 1.207, 3).

<sup>16</sup> *Glossa Psalorum* on Ps. 82 (LXX 81; Boese, 1.370–72). “*non natura sed nuncupative*,” (Boese, 1.370, 16).

<sup>17</sup> *Glossa Psalorum* on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6; Boese, 1.372, 1–6).

Christ. Of course, they all remain distinct from the “Most High God,” the “God of God” and “Light of Light,” the Son of God by nature.

Two further passages of the *Glossa* assist in noting how God is distinguished from the gods. The comment on Ps. 83 (LXX 82) observes that Judgment Day will manifest only one God;<sup>18</sup> the comment on Ps. 136 (LXX 135), that believers praise God alone.<sup>19</sup> The authority to judge and the right to receive praise stand out as unique attributes of the true God.

In summary, the *Glossa* reflect several disparate pastoral concerns in their references to Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Some express a concern about the nature of humanity as God’s creation, the consequences of the fall, and the possibility of restoration through grace, faith, and hearing the Word of God, at least for the predestined. Other references focus on Christ as truly God or God as singularly divine. There is a continuing need to demarcate him who is God by nature from those who may merely be called gods. For the *Glossa*, Psalm 82:6 (LXX 81:6) continues to stand near the center of the Christian message, able to reflect various aspects of the teaching about monotheism, creation, fall, and restoration.

### **Maximus the Confessor**

Maximus the Confessor (*ca.* 580–662) marks the upper end of our study. He ranks as the most significant theologian of the seventh century.<sup>20</sup> His dedication to the ascetic vision of union with God was matched only by his zeal for theological truth, for him a Neoplatonic articulation of the centrality of Christ for all of existence and the ultimate glorification of the universe in him.

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<sup>18</sup> *Glossa Psalorum* on Ps. 83:1 (LXX 82:2, Boese, 1.373, 3). “God, who will be like you?”—this question, found at Ps. 83:1 (LXX 82:2) in the *Psalterium Romanum*, is in the Hebrew text only at Ps. 35:10 (LXX 34:10) and 71:19 (LXX 70:19). Weber, R., ed., *Psalterium Romanum* (Repr. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> *Glossa Psalorum*, on Ps. 136:2 (LXX 135:2; Boese, 2.174, 3–4).

<sup>20</sup> BBKL, s.v. “Maximus Confessor,” 1993, OCLC.org.

As significant as the topic of deification is for Maximus, he only cites Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) twice.<sup>21</sup> In the first, found in *Ambiguum* 20 of the *Ambigua ad Joannem*, he comments on Gregory of Nazianzus’s discussion of Paul’s ascent to the third heaven.<sup>22</sup> Reflecting on Nazianzus’s question in Oration 28.20, “Had Paul been able to express the experiences gained from the third heaven, and his progress, or ascent or assumption?” Maximus writes:

Those who with wisdom have studied the divine words say that names are predicated of things according to the following three comprehensive categories: some names are predicated of an essence, others of a condition, and still others of grace or perdition. A name of an essence, for example, is when they say “man,” while that of a condition is when they say a “good,” or a “holy,” or a “wise man,” as well as the opposite of this, namely, a “wicked,” or “foolish,” or “impure man” (for the category of condition, in setting forth the way a particular thing is somehow related to something else in the case of diametrical opposites, rightly names it on the basis of what characterizes its freely chosen, habitual state). Again, a name indicative of grace is when man, who has been obedient to God in all things, is named “god” in the Scriptures, as in the phrase, *I said, you are gods*, for it is not by nature or condition that he has become and is called “god,” but he has become God and is so named by placement and grace. For the grace of divinization is completely unconditioned, because it finds no faculty or capacity of any sort within nature that could receive it, for if it did, it would no longer be grace but the manifestation of a natural activity latent within the potentiality of nature. And thus, again, what takes place would no longer be marvelous if divinization occurred simply in accordance with the receptive capacity of nature. Indeed it would rightly be a work of nature, and not a gift of God, and a person so divinized would be God by nature and would have to be called so in the proper sense. For natural potential in each and every being is nothing other than the unalterable movement of nature toward complete actuality.

How, then, divinization could make the divinized person go out of himself [ἐξίστησιν ἑαυτοῦ], I fail to see, if it was something that lay within the bounds of his nature. In the same manner, but in the case of what is contrary, the sages give the names of “perdition,” “Hades,” “sons of perdition,” and the like, to those who by their disposition have set themselves on a course to nonexistence, and who by their mode of life have reduced themselves to virtual nothingness.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A search for the lemma θέωσις in Maximus’s works in the TLG yields 72 results (Jan 11, 2020). Maximus clearly does not depend on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to support his discussion of the concept. Of the many works of Maximus, the references to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) occur only in early texts, suggesting that Maximus moved beyond any need to reference this psalm.

<sup>22</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Jo.* 20.

<sup>23</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 20 (PG 91:1237). “Ambigua to John, 1–22,” in *On Difficulties in the*

This text illustrates both the centrality of the concept of deification for Maximus' theological vision and how he conscientiously delimits that concept. On the one hand, it represents the ultimate goal of the human creature and the height of human glorification. Moving through "progress" to the peak of "ascent," deification occurs with the final "assumption" into God. Indeed, Maximus suggests that there are only two potential outcomes for humanity: deification or annihilation.

Maximus clarifies that when human beings are called "gods," this is a title given by grace, not a natural endowment or an actualized natural potentiality.<sup>24</sup> It is thus an "improper" title rather than a proper one. For Maximus's spirituality, this underscores the experience of *ekstasis*, for the ultimate state of the human creature depends on the gift and working of God, who exists outside of him.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the whole structure of Maximus's thought observes a careful attention to the Creator-creature distinction. Thus, even as he concludes that the human creature may be called and become god, become like God and even equal to God, he immediately qualifies this, "as much as this is possible."<sup>26</sup> It is the optimization of the human creature which Maximus wishes to communicate, without transgressing the distinction between the one true God and those with whom He shares deity.

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*Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, trans. Nicholas Conostas, vol. 1, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 28 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 409–11.

<sup>24</sup> Blowers grants that Maximus does not always use "nature" in a singular sense, sometimes making it a basic synonym to a stable essence and sometimes making it the open-ended foundation of a motion toward a deified reality. This passage, however, makes clear that nature, whatever its God-given potential, cannot of itself achieve its own God-ordained actualization. Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 202.

<sup>25</sup> This ecstatic spirituality of existential orientation outside of oneself and radical dependence on God, leading to "a kind of self-transcendence," has deep roots in the tradition and can be found, for example, in Athanasius. Anatolios notes that the departure from "all human things" does not suggest that body, senses, and the world are bad in themselves, as long as they are used "within that dynamic of self-transcendence." Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998), 63.

<sup>26</sup> Cf., Plato *Theaet.* 176b, where the wise aim to become like the gods, κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν.

Finally, in the context of this passage, Maximus beautifully correlates his understanding of progress, ascent, and assumption to the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. This is a universal goal for all Christians. He leaves unanswered whether this perfect and perfecting love for God may be attained in this life, although it seems that the root passage from 2 Corinthians would affirm that at least St. Paul did experience such a heavenly ascent in the course of his life in this world.

What use does Maximus make of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) here? He employs it in isolation, without any reference to its context in the psalm as a whole or even to the completion of its thought in verse 7. In fact, he does not even reference filiation in this passage or cite the phrase “and sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6b, LXX 81:6b). Rather, Maximus simply employs it to affirm deification. In this, he also clearly differentiates the God who calls and assumes from the human creatures who are called, become, and are assumed as gods. His approach follows the center line of the tradition: distinguishing the Creator and the creatures, acknowledging the gift of grace, affirming that this is no natural attainment, and limiting the denotation of the title “god” when applied to those creatures who partake of God. His pastoral focus is to declare the eschatological fulfillment of creation attained through the work of Christ. This broadens the believers’ vision of the significance and purpose of life, so that the choices of daily life might be made in the light of eternity.

Another of Maximus’s citations of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), possibly the earlier, occurs in an exhortation to the ascetic life, where he chastises his hearers for their pharisaical hypocrisy.<sup>27</sup> This is a part of a larger pastoral strategy in the *Liber asceticus*, which first describes Christ’s

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<sup>27</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Liber asceticus* 37, 45. Maximus’s use of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as part of a rebuke of his hearers recalls the homilies of Origen, particularly the homilies on Ps. 38 (LXX 37) and Ps. 82 (LXX 81). Origen, however, demonstrates more confidence in the ultimate victory of the grace of God.

work of salvation and then its intended effect in the life of the believer, followed by the rebuke of “threatening Scriptural quotations” and concluding with the promises of God’s mercy.<sup>28</sup> His practice approximates the pastoral care which the Lutheran tradition would label “the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.”<sup>29</sup> The faithlessness of the brothers leads Maximus to rebuke them that they are no longer children of God. His usage here reflects the conclusions of scholars who have noted that Maximus will speak more pejoratively of human nature in ascetic contexts, highlighting that nature’s weakness, its “ontological poverty,” and the “residual chaos” which inheres in beings created *ex nihilo*.<sup>30</sup> His catena of references moves from 1 Thess. 5:5 (“children of the night and of darkness”) to Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7), Dan. 3:34 (“delivered into the hands of wicked enemies...”), and Heb. 10:29 (“treading underfoot the Son of God” and “esteeming the blood of the testament unclean”). The “sons of the Most High” are identical with the “children of the light” who revere the Son of God and esteem the blood of the testament that bought them. Maximus does not cite the full verse of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), so he does not address how human beings are “gods” in any sense. Rather, he cites the fall from Ps. 82:6b through 82:7 (LXX 81:6b through 81:7) as a kind of fall from grace. Placed in this context, it is a fall from the authentic practice of the faith. Granting that Maximus is consistent with his other thoughts in this passage, one would posit that the “gods” of Ps. 82:6a (LXX 81:6a) would be all faithful Christians. As he matches Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) with Dan. 3:34, he calls the devil the prince of the world into whose hands the wicked are delivered. As a result, the sinful human

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<sup>28</sup> Ian M. Gerdon, “The Evagrian Roots of Maximus the Confessor’s Liber Asceticus,” *Studia Patristica* 75 (2017): 130.

<sup>29</sup> Gerdon reads Maximus in continuity with Evagrius and his spiritual program. Here Maximus is rousing the brothers from ascetic lethargy and urging them to the imitation of Christ. Gerdon, “Evagrian Roots of Maximus,” esp. 129–31, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 117, 203–4. Blowers cites Maximus, *Amb. Jo.* 8.

being does not simply fall “like” Satan but falls *into* Satan’s clutches.

### Conclusions for the Seventh Century

While retaining a variety of applications, this final period evidences a new tendency to identify the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) with the saints (Pamphilus, *Glossa*), holy human beings (Isidore of Seville) who have attained the high virtue of taming their tongues (*Commentarius*) and have been deified through their ascetic disciplines (Maximus).<sup>31</sup> Voices like Cyril’s and Augustine’s which can affirm that all baptized Christians are “gods” have become infrequent and, for many, the “saints” have arisen to occupy the category of the fully sanctified. In terms of pastoral care, these exemplary Christians serve as models to emulate but also as spiritual companions whose nearness and relatability were felt to enrich the experience of Christian spirituality. Otherwise, the pastoral employment of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in this period continues along familiar lines: distinguishing the deity of Christ and of the Triune God, exhorting Christians to godly virtue, negotiating the proper reverence due God-given authority, and holding forth the hope of glory to come. The author with the most detailed and developed vision of that glory is Maximus, who, strangely, develops that vision with relatively little reference to Psalm 82 (LXX 81), turning instead to other passages as foundations for his theological edifice.<sup>32</sup> The eschatology of deification, once so dependent on Psalm 82 (LXX 81),

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<sup>31</sup> Without citing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) specifically, Ps.-Dionysius supports this reading of the “gods” when he says, “You will also notice how God’s word gives the title of ‘gods’ not only to those heavenly beings who are our superiors but also to those sacred people among us who are distinguished for their love of God. . . . Every intelligent and reasonable person who returns to God to be united with him, strives to be enlightened by divine matters, and tries as hard as possible to imitate God deserves to be called divine.” Ps.-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 12.3; Ps.-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, trans. and ed. Colm Luibhid and Paul Rorem, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium Series (Mahway, NJ: Paulist, 1987), 176.

<sup>32</sup> Maximus frequently turns to the language of 1 John 3:1–3, especially with its phrasing that Christians both “are called and are” the children of God. It seems that Maximus was drawn to the ontological promise of a new mode of existence for humanity in Christ which the potentially only nominal “I said” of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) could not support.

is now supported in the main by other verses.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### DISCERNING THE “GODS”: PASTORAL PRESUPPOSITIONS, PRACTICES, AND PATTERNS IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF PSALM 82:6

This study, with the large size of its data field, suggests a good variety and a large number of possible conclusions. However, in order to respect the limitation of that data gathered to this point—that it represents a focus on discrete patristic passages without the possibility of exploring their full import in the theological system of each author—the conclusions drawn here will remain close to the evidence so as to provide a sure basis for further research. As we have been attempting to demonstrate in the survey of the evidence, the church fathers cited Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) as they were impelled by various identifiable pastoral motivations. Before we survey those, however, we must return to a more philosophical matter in order to contextualize what some Fathers meant when they posited that human creatures may (or even must) transcend human nature in order to attain the full salvation given them in Christ. Moving inward from the outer philosophical framework, we then summarize their own exegetical practices, with a focus on the specific intertextual connections associated with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and the patristic *akribeia* or “precision” in reading the Scriptures. These interpretive practices themselves evidence a pastoral concern to understand and teach the Scriptures faithfully, that is, according to the Christ-centered faith passed down within the church. Finally, we arrive at the pastoral “heart” of the matter with the scope of direct pastoral applications which the church fathers made of the passage as they sought to guide their flock with the Word of God.

#### The Question of Nature

Underlying this project is the extent to which the church fathers affirm that human creatures become “gods” through Christ’s saving work and how they articulate the precise limits

of that affirmation in their observation of the abiding Creator-creature distinction. Those passages in which they give attention to human nature (φύσις, *natura*) present open pathways into their thinking on this topic. The Fathers of the six centuries of our investigation did not maintain a single definition of nature (φύσις, *natura*); even individual authors do not necessarily employ the term univocally.<sup>1</sup> For example, sometimes φύσις functions synonymously with οὐσία, the “essence” or irreducible being of something, while at other times it indicates, like ὑπόστασις, or even πρόσωπον, the characteristics manifested in the physical world.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, the second denotation is more plastic than the first. This section will review the appearance of these lexemes only within the passages central to this study, passages which cite Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and particularly Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7), in order to indicate some of the diversity and consistency in patristic thought on this topic.

Irenaeus, in his response to Gnosticism, elaborates a theology which answers the Gnostic charge that the Creator should be blamed for problems found in creation. His solution involves a recognition of the original weakness of humanity but also the assertion of a divine plan of progress by which humanity should advance to attain to the immortality of divinity. The key passage for our purposes appears in book four of *Adversus Haereses*. He begins by characterizing his opponents:

Irrational, therefore, in every respect, are they who await not the time of increase, but ascribe to God the infirmity of their nature. Such persons know neither God nor

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<sup>1</sup> Blowers indicates how “nature” can have different denotations in Maximus the Confessor. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 202. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* indicates that the meanings of φύσις begins with “to become” and “to grow” and develops to include birth, physical descent, constitution, true nature, kind, etc. It bears both common and technical philosophical sets of meanings. Herman W. Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:251–77. Likewise, *natura* in Lewis and Short ranges from “natural constitution, property, or quality” to “nature, course, or order of things” to “an element, thing, substance” to “natural parts, organs of generation.” *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “natura,” ed. Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, accessed March 3, 2020, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3Dnatura>.

<sup>2</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 40.

themselves, being insatiable and ungrateful, unwilling to be at the outset what they have also been created—men subject to passions;<sup>3</sup> but go beyond the law of the human race, and before that they become men, they wish to be even now like God their Creator (cf., Gen 3:5), and they who are more destitute of reason than dumb animals [insist] that there is no distinction between the uncreated God and man. For these[, the dumb animals,] bring no charge against God for not having made them men; but each one, just as he has been created, gives thanks that he has been created. For we cast blame upon Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods; although God has adopted this course out of his pure benevolence, that no one may impute to Him invidiousness or grudgingness. He declares, “I have said, You are gods; and all sons of the Most High.” But since we could not sustain the power of divinity, he adds, “But ye shall die like men,” setting forth both truths—the kindness of his free gift, and our weakness, and also that we were possessed of power over ourselves. For after his great kindness he graciously conferred good [upon us], and made men like to himself, [that is] in their own power; while at the same time by his prescience He knew the infirmity of human beings, and the consequences which would flow from it; but through [his] love and [his] power, he shall overcome the substance of created nature [or: the substance of the nature that was made]. For it was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and swallowed up by immortality (cf., 1 Cor 15:53–54), and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that man should be made after the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), having received the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:5 and 22).<sup>4</sup>

In this dense passage, Irenaeus affirms the goodness of the Creator and his plan to advance humanity to possess both his image and likeness, complete with immortality and the knowledge of good and evil. The initial weaknesses evident in vulnerability to passions and death which prevented the deification of humanity will be overcome. Strikingly, Irenaeus writes, “Through his love and power, he shall overcome the substance of created nature” or “the substance of the nature which was made” (*secundum autem dilectionem et virtutem vincet factae naturae substantiam*).<sup>5</sup> The nature of a creature *qua* creature cannot, without God’s help, endure forever. Irenaeus suggests that the passions and the sinfulness they engender underlies this inability. But God’s plan for human beings, the “law of the human race,” is that they should begin as human

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<sup>3</sup> *passionum capaces*, capable of holding many passions.

<sup>4</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.38.4 (ANF 2:522). The translation has been slightly modified.

<sup>5</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.38.4, 105.

beings and “at length” become “gods.” Nevertheless, the distinction between the uncreated God and the created order persists as the creatures remain such even while they transcend their initial limitations to attain to what God had always intended for them to become.

The early Alexandrians—Clement and Origen—indicate different approaches in how they relate “becoming god” to nature. Citing the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus, Clement links transformation with both nature and instruction. He cites God’s work of “recreation and renewal” by the covenant as leading to a new tranquility of soul, rest, and peace.<sup>6</sup> There is then a harmony between the kinds of changes which nature achieves and God’s work of bringing the believer to a state of deified tranquility.<sup>7</sup> Against Gnostic polytheism, this similarity of method in the two distinct spheres indicates that the God of nature and the God of the covenant are one and the same. Origen, for his part, focuses on the work of the faithful in doing the works of God in this world. “God wants the one advancing to his word to be better than all human nature.”<sup>8</sup> He emphasizes the contrast between what is humanly possible and what the Christian may accomplish with God’s help. Whereas Clement presents nature as a realm of growth and change indicative of God’s own transforming work, Origen portrays it as representing the limited state which Christians are called to surpass as they answer the call to live radically and fully for God. There is no direct contradiction between the two visions of “nature,” but they illustrate different evaluations of the significance of nature for human glorification. Clement’s approach of drawing parallels between God’s activity and the human experience of the natural world likely proved more amenable for evangelistic engagement with the surrounding culture, while Origen’s

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<sup>6</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.23, 149.

<sup>7</sup> Clement’s understanding of nature as God’s created order hearkens back to Philo. Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:268.

<sup>8</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 16.29, 67–72.

contrast between nature and grace served to challenge Christians with the high call of living fully by the power of Christ.

From the early fourth-century East, Eusebius of Caesarea demonstrates how φύσις can relate to Christology. He closely associates nature with sonship when he writes, “And surely from the name itself, the Son shows [his] natural relationship (φυσικὴν σχέσιν) to the Father, just as, again, the name ‘only-begotten’ encompasses both his nature and his birth itself and the fact that he is an only [Son] and that no other has a share with him in the sonship.”<sup>9</sup> Passages like this demonstrate how church fathers could invoke a contemporary sense of φυσικός which entails connotations of natural sonship and physical descent.<sup>10</sup> In the same century, Hilary of Arles illustrates how this same argument can be made in Latin by connecting *natura* to *nativitas*.<sup>11</sup> The divine Son as Son “by nature” possesses the nature of the Father. With reference to the incarnation, the author of *De Trinitate* (sometimes ascribed to Didymus the Blind) employs φύσις to differentiate between what the Son assumed from humanity and what he did not—sin. “Without sin, he took a share in the nature of human beings.”<sup>12</sup> Together, the two citations from Eusebius and the *De Trinitate* exemplify how the Son shares both in the ontology of the Father and of humanity. Nature (φύσις) identifies “what is distinctive in the nature and constitution of individual phenomena.”<sup>13</sup> As many Fathers explicitly note, only a Son who is thus one with the

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<sup>9</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 1.10.3. Making roughly the same point of the relationship between birth and nature, Gregory of Nyssa will also write later in the fourth century: “What becomes a child of another is fully of the same kind (ὁμογενές same family, genus, character) with its begetter.” His point, however, is not principally Christological but that Christians should reflect the character of God. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Catech. Magna* 40, 52–53.

<sup>10</sup> Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:252.

<sup>11</sup> Hilary of Arles, *Trin.* 7.21.41: “quia uniuersa nativitas non potest non in ea esse natura unde nascatur.” Cf., *Trin.* 9.37.15.

<sup>12</sup> (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 3 (PG 39:821).

<sup>13</sup> Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:254. The identity of φύσις with constitution would be affirmed by Aristotle.

Father by constitution and likewise one with humans can serve as the Mediator, the Bridge, and the Reconciler of God and humanity.<sup>14</sup>

The passage from *De Trinitate* also illustrates how human nature can be distinguished from human sinfulness, indeed, how this must be done in order to faithfully depict the incarnation.<sup>15</sup> The Fathers did not always carefully observe this distinction, as they sometimes read the Scriptures as equating humanity with weakness, mortality, and even sinfulness.<sup>16</sup> Even as they confessed the full human incarnation of the Word, their comments expressing the need for humanity to transcend its humanness are cyphers for their grappling with that part of the biblical revelation which would later be identified as the doctrine of original sin. In these cases, the Fathers employ the concept of nature to instruct clearly about the corruption of the human condition apart from Christ and the degree to which Christ has joined the human family as a brother who has come to save.

Beginning with our fourth-century citations, we find a number of authors who, in discussing Psalm 82 (LXX 81), relate human nature with mortality in various ways. The psalm passage itself, “you will die like [a] human being[s],” already endorses the association. Works by Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea, both hailing from the 330’s, provide detailed, if different,

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Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:257.

<sup>14</sup> As just one example, Cyril of Alexandria argues that only the divine Word can, by coming to human beings, make them gods. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Jo.* (Pusey 2:256, 13).

<sup>15</sup> The Lutheran Confessors in the Formula of Concord I, “On Original Sin,” took note of this same distinction. Formula of Concord I in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 531–42.

<sup>16</sup> Fathers who can describe human beings leaving behind their humanity with their sin include Origen (*Hom. Lev.* 11.2), Gregory of Elvira (*Tract. Orig.*, Tract. 1, 273), Asterius “Ignotus” (*Hom. 30*, Kinzig 2:495), Augustine (e.g., *Sermo 166*) and Jerome (e.g., *Tract. lix Ps.*, Ps. 116 [LXX 115], 58; Ps. 136 [LXX 135], 9). These represent both the eastern and western church, suggesting that there may be more agreement on the understanding of human nature than first appears, e.g., in the common suggestion that the East had a more positive view in contrast to the West’s pessimism. Cf., Carl Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 110.

explanations of the relationship between humanity and mortality. Athanasius grounds human mortality in the naturally ephemeral character of anything created from nothing.<sup>17</sup> Its constancy can only be preserved by preserving its likeness to the “One Who Is” and so “escaping (ἐκφυγόντες) the natural state [of corruption] by the grace of participation in the Word.”<sup>18</sup> This participation enervates the natural forces of corruption inherent in the very ontology of creation *qua* creation. Eusebius, in a brief note in his commentary on Ps. 56:11 (LXX 55:12), can also facilely identify being human with being “flesh,” that is, mortal and sinful.<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere, however, he grants that human beings are “mortal by nature,”<sup>20</sup> but grounds that mortality in human wickedness, as contrasted with their creaturely nature.<sup>21</sup> “You are not wicked (κακοὶ) by nature but you do not make use of good choices.”<sup>22</sup> Mortality comes as a consequence of sin, which remains clearly distinct from nature as the good creation of God. About a century later, Jerome will ask, “Where are those who assert that that nature was created evil by God?”<sup>23</sup> One perceives here the need to draw the line against the increasing threat of Manichaeism.

For several Fathers, then, Adam’s fall into sin accounts for the current mortality of human

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<sup>17</sup> “It has been rightly pointed out that the φύσις-χάρις distinction in Athanasius belongs within the more radical framework of the fundamental distinction between created and uncreated. Within this framework, the φύσις of created beings is precisely their creatureliness, the fact of having come to be from nothing as essentially constitutive of an inherent proclivity toward that nothingness. φύσις thus represents the radical dependency of the creature on the One who brought it into being, and apart from whom it is powerless to sustain itself in being.” Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of His Thought*, 55.

<sup>18</sup> Athanasius, *Inc.* 4.6 and 5.1.

<sup>19</sup> Eusebius, *Comm. Ps. on Ps 56:11*(LXX 55:12; PG 23:497). The argument depends on Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) and 1 Cor. 3:3.

<sup>20</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 1.20.21.

<sup>21</sup> Contrast this with Justin Martyr’s statement that wicked desire is in every human being “by nature.” *I Apol.* 10.6, 4–5. The demons σύμμαχον λαβόντες τὴν ἐν ἐκάστῳ κακὴν πρὸς πάντα καὶ ποικίλην φύσει ἐπιθυμίαν (D. Minns and P. Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, Apologies* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], TLG).

<sup>22</sup> Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* 82 (LXX 81; PG 23:989a).

<sup>23</sup> Or: “that an evil nature was created by God?” Jerome, *Tract. lix Ps.*, Psalm 82 (LXX 81).

nature.<sup>24</sup> Becoming a “god” may equate to a restoration of the original blessed condition of immortality and union with God.<sup>25</sup> Gregory of Elvira follows this line of thought when he distinguishes the human creature as an image of God (that is, having an invisible, immortal, and mobile soul) from the likeness of God (that is, possessing godly virtues, which have been lost in the fall). As a consequence of the fall, the human creature, made from the earth, must return to the earth. The likeness is restored only by the incarnate Son who through his resurrection elevates humanity to eternity, immortality, and heavenly glory.<sup>26</sup> “One is no longer called a human being but an immortal god through a transformation of law and condition” (*non iam homo, sed mutata lege et condicione immortalis deus appelletur*).<sup>27</sup> Human nature, in its fallen state, does not attain to immortality but must enter into a super-human state to endure, even if that means eternal existence under the wrath of God (so it seems that the damned, too, are “gods”).<sup>28</sup> Gregory combines both the ontology of creation (earth from earth) and the loss of the likeness of God to account for mortality. Turning to the psalm commentary under the name of

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<sup>24</sup> Some Antiochene theologians provide a clear exception to this rule. Their “two stage” theology allows for an original created mortality only and first overcome by the resurrection of Christ. See Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology*.

<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Origen’s *Sel. Ps.* can turn the tables and use Adam’s state of innocence as definitional for the proper nature of humanity: “For the first man was named as the one who had been made by God according to his image and likeness and so he would be ‘man in the proper sense’” (PG 12:1137, 55). Bennett’s reading of Origen, however, would lead one to believe that Origen here is referencing the “trans-epochal” creation of Adam in the spiritual realm, before the physical creation. Per Origen’s theodicy, embodied humanity in this earthly sphere already instantiates weakness, impurity, mortality, and an inclination to sin as a consequence of the original sins in the spiritual realm. See Byard Bennett, “The Soiling of Sinful Flesh: Primordial Sin, Inherited Corruption and Moral Responsibility in Didymus the Blind and Origen,” *Adamantius* 11 (2005): 77–92.

<sup>26</sup> Gregory of Elvira, *Frag. Gen. iii, 22*.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory of Elvira, *Tract. Orig. Gen. 1*, 265 (Gregory of Elvira, (Ps.-)Gregory of Elvira, and Faustinus Luciferianus, *Opera quae Supersunt, Dubia et Spuria Opera*, ed. Vincent Bulhart, CCSL 69 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1967], CETEDOC). In a similar line of thought, Philo can speak of human beings as having a nature which is νοῦς καὶ λόγος, but good human beings (σπουδαῖοι) as having the distinct nature of ἀρετὴ τελειοτάτη. Philo, *Aet. Mund.* 75.

<sup>28</sup> The idea is already suggested in the Epistle to Diognetus 9.6, 1–2: Ἐλέγξας οὖν ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ τὸ ἀδύνατον τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως εἰς τὸ τυχεῖν ζωῆς (H.-I. Marrou, *A Diognète*, SC 33 [Paris: Cerf, 1965], CETEDOC).

Hesychius, we read of a change in human nature due to the disobedience of Adam, having become both mortal himself and fallen after the pattern of the devil.<sup>29</sup> The created condition of humanity changed and requires recovery in order to know eternal life with God.

In associating human nature with mortality, these authors stand in a long tradition which characterizes human nature by its vulnerability and limitations. Negative statements about human nature and its inherent corruptibility trace back to Classical culture as represented, for example, by Plato and Aristotle.<sup>30</sup> Philo also reflects the dichotomy of the “corruptible nature” of the visible world (φθαρτὴ φύσις) and the divine natures (θεῖαι φύσεις) of the noetic world.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, he can correlate human nature with inhumanity.<sup>32</sup> Josephus, too, in speaking of the universal nature of humanity, typically speaks of it negatively, both in terms of its immorality and its mortality.<sup>33</sup> The Apostle Paul himself links immorality and mortality with nature in Eph. 2:1–3, as he writes, “You were *dead* in the *trespasses and sins* in which you once walked... We were *by nature* (φύσει) children of wrath, even as the rest.”<sup>34</sup> Finally, the opening of 2 Peter, with its famous promise of participating in the divine nature, indicates that this is predicated upon escaping “the *corruption* that is in the world because of *sinful desire*” (2 Pet. 1:4b).

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<sup>29</sup> Hesychius, *Comm. Ps.* 77–99 (PG 55:732).

<sup>30</sup> Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:255, cites passages which illustrate various aspects of human weakness: Thuc., I.76, 3 (human beings will not reject the opportunity to rule over others but may attend to justice to a degree); Plato, *Theaet.* 149b–c (human nature is too weak to acquire skill without experience); Aristotle *Pol.*, 3.10.1286b, 27 (it would be an act of virtue above human nature for a king to disinherit his unworthy sons for the good of the state); Democritus *Fr.* 297 (the decomposition of mortal nature—θνητῆς φύσεως διάλυσις). Mortality is also highlighted in Aelianus *Var. hist.* 8.11, 2. Per Plato’s *Resp.* 2.359c, avarice is also common to human nature, as Augustine would also affirm.

<sup>31</sup> Philo, *Praem.* 26; *Conf.* 154. Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:268.

<sup>32</sup> Philo, *Spec.* 2.93; 3.110. Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:269.

<sup>33</sup> Cf., Josephus, *Ant.*, 5.215, 6.59, 6.136, 6.341, 10.241, 19.296; for mortality, cf., 15.372. Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:270.

<sup>34</sup> Origen already observed the significance of this passage. *Comm. Rom.* 3.1.198.

A significant exception to the discussion of nature in the context of the exegesis of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) occurs with the Antiochene theologians. Starting with Diodore of Tarsus, whose only reference to the psalm occurs in his interpretation of Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1), these theologians demonstrate a clear tendency to understand the “gods” of Ps. 82 (LXX 81) as a mere titular reference to human judges, who have been granted that name by God’s grace for their God-given office.<sup>35</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia shifts that reference to priests and then, in a second passage, to those glorified with immortality in the resurrection.<sup>36</sup> Chrysostom offers the aforementioned rhetorical piece in which he argues that human nature does not hinder the potential to make oneself into a god and to recreate oneself as God’s temple through virtue.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the balance of his references to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) focus on the “title” which rulers or Jews or Christians receive from God.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Theodoret can positively cite Ireneaus’s depiction of the Christian ascent to God, but in his own words he most frequently returns to the language of the “title” of “god” granted to Christians.<sup>39</sup> In contrast with much of the rest of the tradition, for the Antiochene “school” there is little to no discussion of limits or transformation of human nature, since the psalm is largely presumed to indicate only an honorific name which God may grant either to all his people or to a subset thereof.

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<sup>35</sup> Diodore states that judges are granted τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ. Diodore, *Comm. Ps.* on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1), TLG 4134.004.49.1b, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Comm. xii prophetas minores* on Mal. 2, paraphrases the accusing prophet as meaning that the priests have been deemed worthy of the same “care and honor” (κηδεμονίας τε καὶ τιμῆς ἠξιώθητε τῆς αὐτῆς). The application of the resurrection occurs in *Frag. Rom. (in catenis)* 138, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Act. 32* (PG 60:238).

<sup>38</sup> Arguing against the Arians, Chrysostom tersely distinguishes the way Christians are “gods” from the way Christ is God: “Here is the name, there is the fact” (ἐνταῦθα ῥῆμα, ἐκεῖ πρᾶγμα). Chrysostom, *De consubstantiali* (PG 48:758).

<sup>39</sup> Theodoret, *Ep. 147*, 211; *Quaest. in Octateuchem.* 45, 25; 135, 14; *Int. Ps.* on Ps. 1 (PG 80:868), on Ps. 50 (LXX 49, PG 80:1229), on Ps. 82 (LXX 81, PG 80:1529), on Ps. 136 (LXX 135, PG 80:1921).

In contrast with those who took a negative view of human nature and with those who did not engage that topic, a few patristic voices used “nature” to indicate the good work of God, whether in creation or re-creation. Ignatius of Antioch can employ “nature” to depict the good character of Christians.<sup>40</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, reflecting a more Aristotelian and static understanding of nature, teaches his catechumens that any change in human nature would be a loss, since that nature is already laudable in being rational, capable of knowledge, and possessing an array of “special characteristics of human nature”; the only transformation one should expect is moral—the blotting out of evil characteristics and the cleansing of the will—though untold glorious promises do await those who have lived well.<sup>41</sup> Nyssa thus leverages “nature” to affirm the dignity and potential of the human creation, also after the fall, and to direct the energy of the spiritual life to a proper exercise of the will.

Cyril of Alexandria both affirms and denies that the human “god” transcends human nature. In the *Commentary on John*, he teaches that the “created and dependent creature is called to things beyond nature” (πρὸς τὰ ὑπὲρ φύσιν) in a relation to Christ by grace.<sup>42</sup> This entails a dignity that “transcends our nature” without making human beings sons in the same way that Christ is. At the same time, he describes this process as a recovery of “the ancient beauty of our nature” as it is “conformed to the divine nature” and overcomes “the evils that arose from the fall.”<sup>43</sup> David Maxwell clarifies that, for Cyril, life itself is a divine property, granted at creation,

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<sup>40</sup> Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:276. Cf., Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1.1 and *Trall.* 1.1.

<sup>41</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Catech. Magna* 40 (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Catechetical Oration of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, 116–17). According to McGuckin’s reading, Nyssa actually bridges any distinction between ontological and moral transformation by recognizing goodness to be one of the essential perfections of God, “so that progress in virtue is participation in God.” McGuckin, “Deification in the Cappadocians,” 107.

<sup>42</sup> Cyril, *Comm. Jo.* on 1:12 (Pusey 1:133).

<sup>43</sup> Cyril, *Comm. Jo.* on 1:12 (Pusey 1:133, Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 100).

lost in the fall, and restored through Christ.<sup>44</sup> Thus the “supernatural” state of participating in life with God belonged to Adam and the current postlapsarian natural state reflects the deathly existence of life without God. “Nature” here indicates “ordinary, natural human nature as distinct from non-human phenomena or non-natural phenomena in the human sphere.”<sup>45</sup> In *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, Cyril denies that the honor of being called “god” is anything more than an “accidental” property (τὸ ἐπὶ τῷδε), for “each remains in his own nature.”<sup>46</sup> This presumes an understanding of φύσις, reminiscent of Nyssa’s, as a universal constant and safeguarded by established laws.<sup>47</sup> One might summarize Cyril by saying that life with God entails a supernatural state even for the creature which remains within its nature and cannot become “God by nature.”

Finally, much could be said about Maximus the Confessor on this topic, especially as his own use of φύσις at times expresses a static givenness and at times a dynamic potential, at times the weakness of creatureliness and at times the graced raw material which God transforms with a new mode of being.<sup>48</sup> In our study, *Ambiguum ad Joannem 20* recalls both Athanasius in emphasizing the limitations of creatureliness and Cyril in describing θεώσις as a work of grace which elevates the human creature beyond nature through union with God. For Maximus, any working of grace is supernatural and beyond the capacity of the natural condition, otherwise grace would not be grace. The divinized person must “go out of himself” to transcend “human

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<sup>44</sup> Maxwell, “Justification in the Early Church,” 32.

<sup>45</sup> Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:254. Aristotle particularly underlined the relationship between nature as the autonomous course of events apart from the involvement of supernatural forces. Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:258.

<sup>46</sup> Cyril, *Sanct. Trin. dial.* (Aubert, 520).

<sup>47</sup> Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:256, with reference to the pre-Socratics, Aristotle, Epicurus, and others. Gregory of Nyssa, previously cited, endorses such a fixed view of human nature, admitting only a “renewal and change of our nature” in terms of reformation of evil characteristics and the cleansing of the will. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catech. Or.* 40 (Srawley, 116–17).

<sup>48</sup> Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 128, 202–04.

nature, virtue, and knowledge” and through participation in grace attain to the name and the state of God.<sup>49</sup> As with Cyril, nature can reference the human experience apart from God’s renewal and restoration, limited to its own mortal and creaturely possibilities. Maximus thus can contrast not only nature and grace but even nature and God, such that the Christian who becomes a “god” is directed toward, lives from, and is transformed by his relationship with God, quite apart from any inherent natural potential.

On the basis of this brief survey, other patristic passages become clearer. What do church fathers mean when they associate humanity with sinfulness and assert that the saved and the sanctified ascend beyond the human condition to become gods? What does Ps.-Hilary mean when he writes: “For as God against nature became a participant in human nature, so the human being against his own nature has become a participant of the divine nature?”<sup>50</sup> What do so many Fathers mean when they say that one must cease being human in order to cease from various vices and practice any number of virtues? When “human nature” means the human condition as it stands in this world apart from God’s grace and working, then it is clear that those who experience God’s transforming work have become more than human as that humanity is commonly experienced.<sup>51</sup> Such an elevation does not equate to ontological identity with God (which is impossible), and for many it may simply signify a return to the original state of Adam and/or to God’s original intent for the human creature. For others, this attainment of a “supernatural” condition in Christ is a new reality, a potentiality given with creation but only achieved by Christ’s resurrection and the work of His Spirit. In patristic discussions of Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX

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<sup>49</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Joannem*, Ambiguum 20.

<sup>50</sup> Ps.-Hilary of Arles, *Tract. Ep. Cath., 2 Pet.*, 36 (Robert E. McNally, ed., *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores*, vol. 1, CCSL 108B [Turnhout: Brepols, 1973], CETEDOC).

<sup>51</sup> In fact, the absolute immutability of nature was characteristic of early Gnostic thought. Beyer, “φύσις κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9:277.

81:6–7), “nature” became a serviceable concept for the Fathers who understood the passage to be a window into what it means to be human and what it might mean to be called a god. This, in turn, served their pastoral proclamation, for “basic to all homilies was the preacher’s theology of the human condition, or malady, and the manner in which Christ’s life, death, and resurrection brought salvation.”<sup>52</sup> Thus the pastors of the early church employed the concepts of human nature, its limitations, and the possibilities of its transcendence to proclaim the need for salvation and the effect of the transformation Christ offers.

### **Intertextual Nexuses of Biblical Passages**

As pastors in the church, the church fathers do not understand their principle task to be one of philosophical discourse, even if the issue of “the nature of nature” needs to be addressed at times. Rather, they model for believers the methodology of drawing truth from the Sacred Scriptures, which they take to be the inspired Word of God. Knowing it to be God’s Book with divine meaning inlaid throughout, they instinctively interpret the Scripture with Scripture.<sup>53</sup> In the examples of our study, sometimes they begin with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and turn to other passages to clarify it—John 1:12 explains how human beings become “sons of God” through Christ, for example. Sometimes Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) is the clarifying passage for an otherwise obscure passage, such as the reference to the “sons of God” who become enraptured with the “daughters of human beings” in Genesis 6.<sup>54</sup> Of the some 500 verses which the Fathers link with

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<sup>52</sup> Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church*, 109.

<sup>53</sup> See particularly John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> The first to make the connection between Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and Gen. 6 appears to have been Basil or Ps.-Basil, for the text is *Virginit.* (PG 30:776). Otherwise, Chrysostom initiated the tradition in *Hom. Gen.* 67 (PG 53:187). Five others follow this pattern. The standard interpretation reads these “sons of God” as once virtuous humans, so that their fall into sexual sin becomes a cautionary tale for Christians.

Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), twenty-seven Bible passages occur relatively frequently, and various patterns of usage emerge.<sup>55</sup> These intertextual connections guide pastoral interpretation and application of the text and come to characterize the Christian exegetical tradition at this point.

First, it is notable that the passage under discussion is Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and not John 10, which also cites Ps. 82:6a (LXX Ps 81:6a) and therefore contains the same key words of our database searches verbatim. Although a minority of instances (43 citations out of 295 total patristic passages) will reflect the specific context of John 10:34–36, it is the psalm passage itself which is most frequently cited, either explicitly or implicitly. The initial context in the psalter already bears such authority as divine Scripture that even the dominical citation adds no further weight to the argument. If anything, the Lord’s citation as an appeal to Scripture underwrites the direct appeal to the Psalter by those who would follow him.

The six passages most frequently associated with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) are 1 Cor. 8:5–6 (cited 31 times), Exod. 7:1 (26 times), 1 Cor. 3:3–4 (19 times), John 1:12 (19 times), Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1; 18 times), and Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27; 17 times). The value of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 8 lies in the recognition of “gods” (“there are many gods and many lords,” 1 Cor. 8:5) while reaffirming monolatry (“for us there is one God...from whom are all things”, 1 Cor. 8:6). The epistle thus provides a key clarification of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). The first extant author to connect this Pauline text to the psalm was Origen, with thirteen other authors doing the same.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Some subjectivity enters this project in determining the limits of a “context.” At times, an author clearly enters a new topic, addresses an issue with Psalm 82 (LXX 81), and then moves on to a new topic. At other times, the explanation may ramble about or dwell on a topic in its broader sense without marking clear transitions. Also, some subjectivity enters the analysis at the point of deciding when an allusion to a biblical idea counts as a reference to a specific passage.

<sup>56</sup> In fact, Origen has a strong preference for appealing to 1 Cor. 8 in connection with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), doing so six times. Cyril follows him with four instances of this linkage.

Similarly, Exod. 7:1, in which Moses is named “god to Pharaoh,”<sup>57</sup> offers a clear example in which “god” indicates a mere functional title granted to a human being according to God’s own declaration. In this case, it was Novatian who appears to have begun the tradition and no less than 19 other authors also make the connection, the highest frequency of authors supporting an intertextual pairing.<sup>58</sup>

1 Cor. 3:3–4, Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), and John 1:12 function to define the “gods” in various ways. Popular with Origen (5 citations) and Didymus (6 citations) and used more than once by Augustine and Jerome, 1 Cor. 3:3–4 (“For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? . . . Are you not being merely human?” ESV) identifies jealousy and strife as hallmark characteristics of humanity after the fall into sin. The passage implies the need for human beings to undergo a radical transformation in order to be made fit for the fellowship of God. Psalm 82:6 (LXX 81:6) provides the alternative: if sin characterizes humanity, then the virtuous are “gods.” Church fathers make these connections to exhort Christians to live up to that calling.

Another defining intertextual partner (17 citations)<sup>59</sup> with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) is Exod. 22:28a (LXX 22:27a), which reads in the LXX, “You will not malign gods” (θεοὺς οὐ κακολογήσεις). Although the Vulgate has a similar reading (*diis non detrahes*), the connection

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<sup>57</sup> The ESV renders it “like God to Pharaoh.” The LXX (together with the Vulgate and the BHS) simply states that Moses has been given or established as “Pharaoh’s god” (ἰδοὺ δέδωκά σε θεὸν Φαραώ). The fact that Φαραώ is indeclinable allows for an interpretation as a dative or a genitive.

<sup>58</sup> Novatian, *Trin.* 20. While Novatian does not explicitly cite Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) here, he obviously has the text in mind as he counters those who would rank Christ as an angel. He essentially argues along the lines of John 10 that Christ, who stood so frequently in the synagogues of the Jews and judged them, rightly deserves to be recognized as the God of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), with his non-believing Jewish audience in the role of the “gods.” He is the first to do so. Cf., Vander Hoek, “Function of Psalm 82,” 113.

<sup>59</sup> This does not count the appearance of Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) in *Clem. Hom.* 16.6 and 16.8, where Ps. 82:1 (LXX 81:1) occurs rather than verse 6. This text, written perhaps in the first decade of the fourth century, precedes any Father studied here.

begins in the east in the early fourth century and does not appear in the west until Gregory the Great references it. Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) begins with a prohibition against cursing gods and concludes with a reference to rulers—“and you shall not speak ill of your people’s rulers.” None other than the Apostle Paul applied those words to the Jewish high priest (Acts 23:5), and so, with the passage taken as a synonymous parallelism, the title “gods” became demythologized, that is, understood to reference only human beings. The “gods” were God-given authority figures, whether in the Old Testament or the New, whether in the civil sphere or the ecclesiastical. Theodoret found this passage particularly useful, employing it six times together with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), in order to demonstrate that references to “gods” meant only human priests or judges acting under divine auspices to exercise their God-given tasks.<sup>60</sup> His chief underlying concern at these points was to prevent any misunderstanding of the Scriptures which would undermine the monotheism of the Christian faith.

The next defining passage, John 1:12, was a favorite of Augustine, who was responsible for seven of its nineteen citations. Given that the psalm may be read to equate the “gods” with “sons of the Most High,” this verse in John clarifies how Christ makes those who believe in him “to become the children of God” by receiving him as their Savior sent from the Father. Justin Martyr laid the groundwork for this connection when he invoked Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to argue that Christians may be called the true children of God (although he did so without directly invoking the work of Christ). Pamphilus’s preservation of Origen’s texts reveals that Origen made the first direct connection between the passages. It would remain a popular solution. In a way, it also demythologizes the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) by identifying them as saved human beings

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<sup>60</sup> Theodoret, *Ep. 147*, links Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) to Ps. 82 (LXX 81) in order to make a distinctly Christological point: the sharing of titles like Christ, Son, and God between Christ and human beings does not eradicate the distinctiveness of Christ or the worship he uniquely deserves.

rather than heavenly spirits. However, in contrast with Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), which can equate the “gods” with rulers, this solution also broadens the application to all Christians. It makes Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and the possibility of deification relevant for all Christians, albeit with the tendency of restricting the concept of deification to that of filiation.

Psalm 50:1 (LXX 49:1; “The God of gods, the Lord spoke and called the earth) offers a parallel to Psalm 82 (LXX 81), for it depicts God ruling gods in a context of judgement, this time clearly judging his people. This connection with Psalm 82 (LXX 81) goes as far back as Irenaeus and is followed by thirteen other authors.<sup>61</sup> The mutual elucidation achieved by pairing these passages directs the interpretation of these psalms to the context of the true God bringing his own chosen ones to account. Again, this counters any risk of a polytheistic reading.

Remarkably, five authors cite Psalm 50:1 (LXX 49:1) together with two or more of these six high-frequency passages when including Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in the same explanatory context: Ps.-Athanasius, Ps.-Didymus, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Cassiodorus, and also the *Glossa*.<sup>62</sup> These “big six” verses each helped to clarify Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and when used in tandem they provided even greater elucidation. The occasions of their joint use demonstrate how the teachers of the church were conscious of their common traditional function to pair with Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in order to offer an orthodox reading of the Scriptures.

Eleven authors link Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to Genesis 1:26, the reference to Adam’s creation

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<sup>61</sup> “Followed” here is meant loosely. While Irenaeus’s works were widely read, it would be impossible to demonstrate direct influence in each of these cases. This pertains to the rest of this section as well.

<sup>62</sup> Ps.-Athanasius, *Exp. Ps. on Ps. 50: 1* (LXX 49:1); (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 3 (PG 39:937); Chrysostom, *Exp. Ps. on Ps. 50:1* (LXX 49:1); Theodoret, *Ep. 147*; Cassiodorus, *Exp. Ps. on Ps. 82* (LXX 81); *Glossa Psalmorum* on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1). *Clem. Hom.* also alludes to three of these high-frequency texts, but only to delegitimize any references to “gods.” *Clem. Hom.* 16.6 and 14. This suggests that the author had been aware of this exegetical tradition, even if only to reject it. Above we noted the apparent effort of this text to “correct” 1 Cor. 8:5–6 in *Hom.* 6.16.

in the image and likeness of God. They range from Irenaeus at the end of the second century, Origen and Didymus in the third, through to Gregory the Great in the west at the end of the sixth century. Clearly, the theology of the image of God provides a foundation for the theology of deification by relating the human creature directly to God within the very constitution and orientation of his or her being.<sup>63</sup> Curiously, Augustine does not cite this passage in connection with Psalm 82 (LXX 81), perhaps because of the eschatological bent of his doctrine of deification.<sup>64</sup>

Two popular passages—Isa. 1:2 (“Children have I reared and brought up but they have rebelled against me,” ESV, fourteen patristic citations in relevant contexts) and Exod. 4:22 (“Israel is my firstborn son,” ESV, ten citations)—served the Fathers by explaining how the people of Israel could be identified as “sons” already in the old covenant. Origen appears to be the first to cite Isa. 1:2 in this context and the Latin Father Gregory of Elvira first cites Exod. 4:22, which otherwise found employ only among Greek Fathers and only for about a century, from the late fourth to early sixth centuries. It had particular traction among “Antiochene” Fathers, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Gennadius I, with their concern to locate the literal meaning of Old Testament passages like Psalm 82 (LXX 81) within the narrative of that

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<sup>63</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus provides an excellent example of the depth of this connection. Cf., Thomas, *Image of God in Gregory of Nazianzus*. Nispel particularly emphasizes how a growing theology of the image of God in humanity accompanied and deepened the integration of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) within the church’s discourse already in the second century. Mark D. Nispel, “I Said, ‘You Are Gods,’” 112.

<sup>64</sup> It is nevertheless all the more surprising because of the great potential for Augustine to make the link between protology (and his great interest in the book of Genesis) and eschatology through a theology of the image. In *Conf.* 13, he interweaves the creation in the image of God with humanity’s recreation in Christ, specifically with reference to discerning God’s will. Meconi holds that for Augustine, “All creation is doxologically deiform in that its very existence points to a self-sufficient and benevolent Maker.” David Vincent Meconi, “Becoming Gods by Becoming God’s: Augustine’s Mystagogy of Identification,” *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 1 (2008): 83. However, as Haflidson observes, most scholars conclude that Augustine centers deification in eschatology. Ron Haflidson, “‘We Shall Be That Seventh Day’: Deification in Augustine,” in *Deification in the Latin Patristic Tradition*, ed. Jared Ortiz, *Studies in Early Christianity* 6 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 171.

Testament.<sup>65</sup> That said, the biblical proclamation that God makes human beings his children reaches the very heart of the church's Gospel message. The relationship with God which Israel had enjoyed is now extended to all believers in Christ and even to a higher degree.<sup>66</sup>

A number of psalms which speak of "gods" are easily brought to bear on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). Six authors, from Origen to the *Glossa*, cite Ps. 96:5 (LXX 95:5) with its explanation that "the gods of the nations are demons" (Origen himself making this reference four times). Others simply identify the true God as the "God of gods" (Ps. 136:2 [LXX 135:2] with 10 authors; Ps. 84:7 [LXX 83:8] with five authors),<sup>67</sup> the "great King above all gods" (Ps. 95:3 [LXX 94:3], five authors), "terrifying beyond all gods" (Ps. 96:4 [LXX 95:4], two authors),<sup>68</sup> and incomparable "among the gods" (Ps. 86:8 [LXX 85:8], three authors; Ps. 89:6 [LXX 88:7], three authors). Each of these grants that there are "gods" in some sense, yet counters that the true God is distinct from and superior to them all. One may have their "gods" and keep their monotheism after all. Here again, a Father who cites one of these psalm texts may then cite others for further support so that the references cluster in intertextual nodes. In conversation with pagans, Origen assembles a heap of such psalm references to "gods" in the *Contra Celsum* and Augustine does the same in *De civitate Dei*.<sup>69</sup> Both authors attempt a conversation with polytheistic paganism regarding the

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<sup>65</sup> Moreschini observes, "Gennadius's exegesis follows Antiochene literalism." Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 595.

<sup>66</sup> Chrysostom, for example, contrasts the sonship of Israel, yet in spiritual bondage, with the true freedom of the children of God granted to Christians through faith in Christ. Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* (PG 60:525). See also Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* (PG 59:93) where he distinguishes the honor given to the Jews to be called children of God and the reality of Christians being truly born again and receiving the Spirit of God.

<sup>67</sup> Not parallel to the English, the LXX reads, "The God of gods will be seen in Zion" (ὁφθήσεται ὁ Θεὸς τῶν θεῶν ἐν Σιών).

<sup>68</sup> φοβερός ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς θεοὺς (LXX); *terribilis est super omnes deos* (Vulgate).

<sup>69</sup> Along with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), Origen's *Cels.* 8.3 cites Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1), Ps. 96:5 (LXX 95:5), Ps. 97:9 (LXX 96:9); Augustine's *Civ.* 9.23 cites Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1), 95:3 (LXX 94:3), 96:4 (LXX 95:4), 96:5–6

multiplicity of “gods” while at the same time reassigning that title to either sanctified believers and/or angels.

The rest of the intertextual pairings with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) occur ten times or less. Of these, it is notable how infrequently Gen. 3:5 appears with its narrative of the serpent’s promise to Eve that she will become “like God/gods.” Although the association between the texts begins as early as Irenaeus, only six authors connect it with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). The first direct citation occurs in the “unorthodox” Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.<sup>70</sup>

Also notable is the significance of Origen for illustrating the intertextual possibilities with Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Of the twenty-seven passages cited five times or more, Origen references sixteen, and of those sixteen he is the first to make the linkage in fourteen cases. He was both original and influential. Two-thirds of Augustine’s links made two or more times have precedents with Origen (that is, of the fifteen passages Augustine repeatedly connected to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), Origen had already used ten of them for the same purpose). Of course, there are cases when Origen’s solutions do not find any echoes in the tradition. Only Didymus the Blind repeats his understanding of Exod. 3:6, where Origen reads God to be declaring himself to be “the God Abraham, the God Isaac, and the God Jacob” (or perhaps this should be rendered in English, “I AM the divine Abraham, the divine Isaac and the divine Jacob”).<sup>71</sup> Few dared to follow Origen into what appeared to be a loss of the individual identity of the patriarchs as their participation in deity merged into identification and possibly absorption.

What we observe, then, with the intertextual patterns established around Ps. 82:6 (LXX

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(LXX 95:5–6), and 136:2 (LXX 135:2).

<sup>70</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 16.6. Irenaeus, however, in *Haer.* 4.38.4 cites the knowledge of good and evil as a positive aspect of redeemed humanity and alludes to the serpent’s promise when he accuses his opponents of wanting to become gods before they have first learned how to be human beings.

<sup>71</sup> Origen, *Sel. Ps.* (PG 12:1656); Didymus, *Frag. Ps.* Frag. 1195, on Ps. 136:1–3 (LXX 135:1–3).

81:6) is a complex network of passages which together serve to communicate and reinforce a “traditional” interpretation of the Psalm amid its pastoral applications. The pairings function to safeguard essential elements of the *regula fidei*, such as the unique deity of God, the creaturely humanity of the “gods,” the sinfulness of fallen humanity, the illegitimacy of the pagan gods, and the unique relationship between God and his people Israel as depicted in the Old Testament. Those outside the stream of the tradition of the Great Church demonstrated different practices: the Gnostic Naassene report found in the *Refutatio omnium haeresium* integrated Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) within Homeric texts and the Jewish-Christian *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* made unprecedented links between Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and particularly verses in the Pentateuch. These alternative associations of texts set in relief the significance of the specifically patristic intertextual patterns which were designed to support theological conclusions in harmony with the *regula fidei*.<sup>72</sup> Patristic pastoral care was practiced within a tradition of intertextuality which drew the hearers toward the monotheistic, Trinitarian, Christological faith of the church. That tradition provided a sure guide for the church in approaching and interpreting the Scriptures, demonstrating a certain consensus of interpretation even while allowing for some variation.

### **The Practice of *Akribeia* in Reading the Scriptures**

In addition to specific intertextual pairings and networks of passages, the patristic exegetical tradition embraced a practice of reading of Scriptures termed *akribeia*. This entails reading the Scriptures with a careful attention to the precise wording of the text and finding

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<sup>72</sup> With respect to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, Carlson comes to a similar conclusion: “It is significant that the Homilist, to the extent that he is a ‘Christian,’ looks not to the *regula fide* espoused by, say, Irenaeus, but to something more akin to the oral tradition as it was seen by the rabbis.” Carlson, *Jewish-Christian Interpretation of the Pentateuch in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, 219.

possible significance in every element of that wording.<sup>73</sup> With few exceptions, this meant an attention to the wording of the Scriptures in translation (LXX, Old Latin Versions, Jerome's Vulgate), though the Greek Fathers at least always had access to the New Testament in the original. The Fathers' meticulous devotion to the warp and woof of the Scriptural text follows from their conviction that the words of Scripture are themselves, in all their details, the words of God, as Justin Martyr confessed in the second century: "When you hear the utterances of the prophets spoken as it were personally, you must not suppose that they are spoken by the inspired themselves, but by the Divine Word who moves them."<sup>74</sup> Consequently, they are the "words of eternal life" (John 6:68) both for the Fathers themselves and for those whom they would teach. "All Scripture," in every detail, is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The patristic exegesis associated with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and its intertextual pairings provides ample evidence for this attention to the minute details of the Scriptures.

The appearance of the term "synagogue" in the translations of Ps. 82:1 (LXX 81:1) led many Fathers to understand the condemned "gods" to be Israel or some subset thereof. That God would appear in the synagogue found its literal fulfillment in the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity and the ministry of Christ among the Jewish people.<sup>75</sup> This, together with the activity of "judging" which occurs repeatedly in the psalm (vss. 1, 2, 3, 8), opened the path for many to discover a prophetic, Christological, and eschatological sense in the text. The Jewish leaders misjudged Christ (Ps. 82:2–5, LXX 81:2–5) who was to come as the judge at the end of

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<sup>73</sup> Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 107; John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

<sup>74</sup> Justin, *1 Apol.* 36 (ANF 1:175).

<sup>75</sup> Eusebius provides a good example in his comments on Psalm 82 (LXX 81). *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:984).

the age and thereby establish true justice (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). This reading also distinguished Christ from human “gods” by casting him in the role of the God who comes to stand among them and thus rules over them.

Several church fathers observed the significance of the opening phrase of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), “I said.” Although only occasionally spelled out, this opening undergirds the instinctive patristic understanding that these “gods” are such by adoption, by grace, and not by nature. The divine declaration indicates a bestowal in time, not an eternal ontological status. These “gods” become such on the basis of divine favor and his calling them into being. Since their existence is a matter of becoming, they naturally stand within a different ontological order than the One Who Is. They are creatures brought into being by the Word, not the Creator. Also, the declared gift does not confer an immutable status but a condition which once gained might also be lost. This calls for a conscientious response from those who would retain it.

Several Fathers find significance in the plural form of “gods” which immediately distinguishes them from the one true God.<sup>76</sup> Platonic presuppositions come to bear with this insight. Plural entities derive their identity from the singular exemplar, the true essential paradigm, such that the “gods” are distinct from the true God even as they reflect something of his character. Some Fathers are also attentive to the “all” of Ps. 82:6b (LXX 81:6b). It can indicate the universal human condition (as all failed in their divine calling, e.g., Justin) and universal human potential (as within reach to all who attend to the Word, e.g., Chrysostom). Only in a few rare exceptions does a patristic text differentiate the “all” who are sons of the Most High from the “gods” in v. 6a, such as when the *Const. ap.* grants the title “gods” to the clergy and that of “sons of the Most High” to the laity.

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<sup>76</sup> E.g., *Serm. annuntiationem Deiparae* (PG 28:933); (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 3.39.865, 30.

Patristic exegetes typically associated deity with immortality, something presumed in a Hellenistic worldview but also found embedded in the text of the psalm itself, with its contrast between the status of the gods and dying like a human being (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). Thus, those who attain to immortality may be titled “gods.” This exegesis also finds parallels in pre-Christian Jewish readings of the psalm.<sup>77</sup> The Fathers’ typical identification of the fallen “one of the princes” (εἷς τῶν ἀρχόντων) with Satan, though somewhat based on the traditional demonology developed from Ezekiel 28 and Dan 10, could find strong support in New Testament texts which labelled Satan an ἄρχων and his demonic horde ἄρχοντες/ἀρχαί (e.g., John 12:31, 1 Cor. 2:6–8, Eph. 6:12). That human beings “die” but this prince “falls” (being a spirit and not flesh and blood) did not escape notice.

From the earliest patristic exegetes of the passage (that is, beginning with Justin Martyr), many of the Fathers associated the phrase “you will die like a human being” with the narrative of Adam. In the Hebrew of Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7), אָדָם, the connection readily manifests itself, since the term for “human being” who dies is none other than Adam’s name (“man” in the classic generic sense). The Greek replacement with the lexeme ἄνθρωπος and its LXX appearance in plural (“die like human beings”) masks over the potential for a direct reference. Following the LXX, Latin versions also recorded *sicut homines* (apart from Jerome’s unpopular *Psalmi iuxta Hebraicum translatus* which restored *quasi Adam*). That Jewish exegetes had already interpreted the passage in terms of Adam’s fall certainly assisted in maintaining this connection.<sup>78</sup> Linking Ps. 82:7 (LXX 81:7) to the narrative of Adam echoes a Jewish practice which Daniel Boyarin

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<sup>77</sup> Mosser, “Earliest Patristic Interpretations,” 65–69.

<sup>78</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘I Said: You Are Gods’: Ps. 82:6 and John 10,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 4 (1989): 657–58.

labels “syntagmatic Midrash” by which verses are “replaced into a new narrative structure.”<sup>79</sup>

This practice persisted in Christian exegesis, especially as Christians were motivated by a desire to proclaim the Scriptures along the lines of the narrative of salvation history. Sometimes the Fathers reproduced the text in the singular (“you will die like *a* human being”), a move which assisted in making the connection with the first mortal.

The Fathers also demonstrate attention to the detailed wording of the text in their reading of Ps. 82:6a (LXX 81:6a) within the context of John 10. Starting with Origen, many highlighted the fact that the “gods” are those “to whom the Word of God came.” Paralleling older Jewish interpretations which understood Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to speak of the divine status of Israel upon hearing the law from Sinai (a status quickly lost with the construction of the golden calf),<sup>80</sup> these Christian readers could interpret “the coming of the Word,” that is, the coming of Christ, as bringing human beings to their ultimate potential. Again, this allowed a deeply Christological and soteriological reading of the text. It also observed the distinction, already found in John 10, between those who are “called gods” because of the coming of God’s Word to them and the One who has been “sanctified” and “sent into the world,” thus taking the role of the coming Word. The patristic concern to underscore the difference between the deity of Christ and that of his recipients thus comes to expression within the text itself.

In terms of attending to details, the Fathers took seriously various other Scripture passages which spoke of “gods,” e.g., that the Lord is “above all gods” and “the God of gods.” They did not simply take such phrases as empty superlatives by which God is exalted over a null set. Granting an explicit and concrete reference to other “gods,” most did not allow that idols or

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<sup>79</sup> Boyarin, *Intertextuality and Reading Midrash*, 26.

<sup>80</sup> Neyrey, “I Said: You are Gods,” 655–56.

demons could function as the “gods” over whom God ruled in exaltation. That offended against the interpretative instinct that the reading should be θεοπρεπής, that is, fitting for God.

Consequently, they often turned to Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) and its intertextually associated passages in order to clarify who these “gods” might be. Pairing the psalm with 1 Cor. 8:5–6 (“Although there may be so-called gods, . . . yet for us there is one God,” ESV), they could make a positive identification of the “gods” above whom God might be exalted and yet qualify their status and so preserve their monotheistic commitment to confessing the one Creator God.

Arguably the most sophisticated observation came from those Fathers who linked Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to Acts 23:5 via Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27).<sup>81</sup> The latter passage, taken as a parallelism equating “gods” with “rulers of your people,” already defines the “gods” as rulers. In the mouth of Paul, that verse then gets applied directly to the chief priests. That the priests may be designated as “those to whom the Word of God has come” is not difficult to argue, so that “gods” became an honorific title for those in the priesthood, even in the church. But others took a similar, if less narrow, approach in recognizing the prophets (and, by extension, the Apostles) as such honored recipients of the Word. After all, didn’t prophetic call narratives typically begin with the phrase, “The Word of the Lord came to . . . ”?<sup>82</sup>

The attention to *akribeia* invited intertextual linkages, particularly where the same lexeme

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<sup>81</sup> The Vulgate (*diis non detrahes*, Exod. 22:28) preserved the possibilities of the LXX (θεοὺς οὐ κακολογήσεις, Exod. 22:28, LXX 22:27). Both reflect the appearance of the ambiguous *’ēlōhîm* in the Hebrew (Exod. 22:28, LXX 22:27). The Vulgate differs from the LXX in proscribing cursing of the “rulers” (plural) of your people. This study did not encounter any Fathers who found significance in either the singular or plural reading.

<sup>82</sup> Neither of these lines of thought support the typical association made today between Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and the concept of deification. When the “gods” are those who belong to the historic roles (the authors of Scripture) or those who are confined in certain institutional roles (priests), then the promise to “become gods” does not exist as an open offer to all who would ascend to spiritual union with God.

appeared.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, a common vocable did not always equate to an identical meaning.<sup>84</sup> Throughout this history, Christian exegetes recognized and depended on the possibility of multivalence, apparently first raised by Marcion although already lying within the citation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in John 10. Not only do words matter but meanings matter, and the Fathers attended to their distinctions carefully.

The exegesis of the church fathers clearly attends to the detailed wording of the Scriptures. If, on the basis of contemporary exegetical standards, one would find fault, it would be easy to point to their frequent failure to note the immediate context of the verses they cite. Thus, not all patristic exegetes observed and respected the rhetorical setting of judgment and condemnation (or at least rebuke) which surrounds Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6).<sup>85</sup> At times, the single verse—"I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High"—or even just the first half of it is extracted for the sake of making a positive statement about the glorification of Christians without any discussion of the original context. Of course, their model in so doing was none other than Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John, for he too alludes to the text to make his point about the propriety of his own divine title without any explicit insinuation that judgment and demotion are coming to the "gods."<sup>86</sup> In many cases, just the brief declaration "You are gods" carried so much weight of

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<sup>83</sup> The *gezerah shava*, a Jewish hermeneutical move, was taken up by early Christians but they loosed it from Jewish hermeneutical controls and were content with the overarching control provided by the rule of faith. "Hermeneutics," <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hermeneutics>.

<sup>84</sup> It would be interesting to explore whether rabbinic hermeneutics posited any similar rule. It is not immediately apparent that it did, and this may relate to the early Christian suspicion that the Jews read the biblical text too literally. Jewish readings eschewed the kinds of spiritual interpretations afforded to Christians through their freer allegorical and typological approaches, which are based in some recognition of multivalence of meaning.

<sup>85</sup> The consistent exceptions tend to hail from the "Antiochene" school.

<sup>86</sup> Oberman, however, suggests ways in which the citation in John 10 may intentionally allude to other elements of Psalm 82 (LXX 81), like the rebuke of the Jewish people and the Sonship of Christ. One could add his coming judgment. Obermann, *Christologische Erfüllung der Schrift*, 183–84. Neyrey, too, argues that the reference to Psalm 82 (LXX 81) is not a matter of mere "extrinsic" wording, but of inner logic connecting the title of "god" with the status of holiness before God. Neyrey, "I Said: You are Gods," 654–57.

possibility and even of promise that the patristic mind connected it immediately with the maximizing gifts which came to God's human creatures through Christ. This they gladly declared to their audiences as both the gift and the goal of the Christian faith. The proclamation of Christ within the church truly provided the essential context for the church fathers in their interpreting, preaching, and teaching the Scriptures.

### Identification of the “Gods” of Psalm 82:6

According to the Fathers of the first six centuries of church history, who are the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81)? How do they become “gods” and what characterizes them as such? This section summarizes these important results of the study—important because it is precisely in their answers to these questions that they demonstrate the pastoral motivations which underlie their exegesis.

The vast majority of commentators on Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) understand the “gods” to be human beings.<sup>87</sup> A few will include angelic or heavenly beings under the designation, without thereby excluding the possibility of human “gods.”<sup>88</sup> Occasionally, the “ruling” aspect of the Psalm 82 (LXX 81) gods carries over to the angelic (or demonic) designation, as they too are described as having (or having had) authority to rule.<sup>89</sup>

In several cases, church fathers affix Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to the biblical narrative and link it

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<sup>87</sup> Hanson surveys early Jewish and Christian literature and identifies four typical identifications of the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81): angels, Melchizedek, judges, and Israel as a whole. Anthony Hanson, “John’s Citation of Psalm LXXXII Reconsidered,” *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966–67): 363–67.

<sup>88</sup> Origen, Novatian, *Dial. duo c. Macedonianos*, Hilary of Poitiers, Didymus, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria (only in *C. Jul.*), Theodoret, *C. philosophos*, Cassiodorus, “The Disciple of Cassiodorus,” and Isidore of Seville. Curious cases of an apparently exclusive angelic reference for the psalm do occasionally appear, as with Jerome (*Comm. Ezech.* 9.28). Such readings hardly appear consistent with the employment of the text in John 10.

<sup>89</sup> Origen, *Hom. Ex.* 8.2.220, 16; Augustine, *Trin.* 3.39.865, 30; Cassiodori discipulus, *Exp. 1 Cor.* (PL 68:525, 50).

to specific individuals who receive or merit the title “god” because of their role in salvation history. Adam, created in the image and likeness of God, without sin and immortal, comes to mind for many.<sup>90</sup> Through Origen’s curious reading of Exod. 3:6, God is declared “the God Abraham, the God Isaac, and the God Jacob,” so that these patriarchs are ranked with divinity.<sup>91</sup> Other unique candidates are Enoch,<sup>92</sup> Noah,<sup>93</sup> Melchizedek,<sup>94</sup> and, of course, Moses, whom God explicitly names “god to Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1).<sup>95</sup> Augustine recognizes John the Apostle as a “god” because of the Evangelist’s exalted spiritual understanding of Christ.<sup>96</sup>

While Adam’s “deity” rested on his being created in the image and/or likeness of God, other highlighted individuals were recognized as “gods” due to their participation in God and/or their superior virtues. Not necessarily exclusive instances, they typically function as examples of larger groups or of the potential ascent of any human being. Identifying specific characters of the biblical narrative as “gods” also serves to highlight the unique works of God narrated by salvation history and the claim of the Christian faith to represent a unique revelation of God and his salvation.

Moving beyond individuals, the groups identified as “gods” fill specific roles which the

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<sup>90</sup> Ps.-Marius Victorinus, *De physicis* 15; Ambrose, *Parad.* 13.61.322, 7; Didymus, *Gen.* 3:22 109, 10 (also copied in Procopius *Comm. Gen.* 3.13, 27); Jerome *Commentarioli* on Psalm 82 (LXX 81), 107–16; *Glossa Psalmorum* Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), 1.372, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Origen (dub.) *Hom. 1* on Ps. 16 (LXX 15) 5,6; Origen; *Hom. 15* on Ps. 76 (LXX 77) 5, 27–38; Didymus also copies this interpretation: *Frag. Ps.* 1195.

<sup>92</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra in Pent.* (PG 69:24).

<sup>93</sup> Didymus, *In. Gen.* 6:5.

<sup>94</sup> Mark the Monk notes that those who identified Melchizedek as a “god” thought of him as the pre-incarnate Christ. *Melch.* 10, 24. Although this identification of Melchizedek with the “god” who judges is also found at Qumran (11QMelch), this Christian debate revolves around the proper understanding of the book of Hebrews.

<sup>95</sup> This common identification is made 26 times in patristic passages about Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Novatian appears to have first made the connection, which then consistently appears throughout the rest of the literature.

<sup>96</sup> Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1 §4, 18.

biblical text associates with the title. Psalm 82 (LXX 81) clearly presents God rebuking those who have judicial responsibilities, so several Fathers name judges and other leaders “gods.”<sup>97</sup> Priests are included in this category, both in Israel and in the church.<sup>98</sup> While this approach is not exclusive to those associated with the “school of Antioch,” Diodore, who stands early in that tradition, is unique in that he only identified the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as judges who were granted that title by grace; this understanding of a titular designation associated with a God-given authority recurs as a predominant motif in Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret. Also, the fourth century, with its elevation of bishops to the rank of imperial authorities and the increasing assimilation of the concept of Christian ministry to the Old Testament priesthood, particularly witnessed the shift toward seeing the Christian clergy as the “gods” through whom salvation came to others.<sup>99</sup> Because “the Word of the Lord came to them” (John 10:35), prophets and apostles can be ranked as “gods” and, potentially, all those who bear the word to others.<sup>100</sup> In short, as *Quaest. respons.* puts it, those called to represent God may be

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<sup>97</sup> Origen, *Cels.* 4.31; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Comm. Ps.* on Ps. 82 (LXX 81); Didymus the Blind, *Frag. Ps.*, Frag. 836; Jerome, *Tract. lix Ps.*, Ps. 82 (LXX 81); Arnobius, *Comm. Ps.*, Ps. 82 (LXX 81); Theodoret, *Quaest. in Octateuchum* 135.

<sup>98</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Comm. Ps.* on Ps. 82 (LXX 81); *Const. ap.* 2.26, 2.31; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Comm. xii proph.* on Mal. 2:10; Cyril of Alexandria, *Exp. Ps.* (PG 69:1205); Arnobius, *Comm. Ps.*, Ps. 82 (LXX 81); Theodoret, *Int. Ps.* on Ps. 136 (LXX 135); Ps.-Gelasius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.8.3; Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 36.

<sup>99</sup> Evidence for this shift is found in *Const. ap.* 26 and 31 which identify the “gods” of Ps. 82 (LXX 81) with the bishops, with the point that they should receive their proper honor. Toward the end of the century, Chrysostom explains his hesitation to accept the priesthood because of the superhuman virtue required of the office-holders (Chrysostom, *Sac.* 3.8.11–15). Also see Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, 48. Carl Volz observes how the title “priest” impacted the function and status of the clergy, with the infusion of Old Testament priestly concepts particularly in the fourth century (exactly when we begin to see the priests identified as the “gods”). Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 33 and 45. At the same time, the association of the clergy with God first rested on their calling to represent God through modelling an exemplary Christian life for all to follow. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 89.

<sup>100</sup> Origen names Ezekiel specifically. Origen, *Sel. Ezech.* 13.769, 28; *Hom. Ezek.* 1.9.1. Others refer to prophets as a whole. Ps.-Chrysostom *In illud: Memor fui Dei* (PG 61:692); Jerome *Comm. Gal.* 1.1, *Comm. Matt.* 3,37, *Comm. Eph.* 2 (both patriarchs and prophets); Cyril of Alexandria *Comm. Jo.* (Pusey 1:250), *Thesaurus de santa consubstantiali Trinitate* (PG 75:317); *Explanation of the Twelve Chapters* (ACO 1.1.5.21). Filastrius offers the broadest category—those who bring the Word to others. *Div. hereseon* 147, 16.

named “gods” as “the title of the Transcendent One has been transferred to those who are inferior according to the glory of each.”<sup>101</sup> Each of these receives the designation because of their divinely appointed role in the community. As the people who had received the Word of God and the calling to become his children, Israel as a whole comes into view for some Fathers. These will then typically emphasize the verdict of the psalm and point to the church as the new assembly of God’s children.

Finally, most authors state or imply that all human beings may become “gods” through the work of Christ. The “mechanism” for this is typically stated as participation in Christ and at times the work of the Holy Spirit is included.<sup>102</sup> This participation may be understood to be granted with baptism (e.g., Cyril of Jerusalem) or only potentially so, needing the actualization of a life lived by faith (e.g., Gregory of Nyssa and Barsanuphius) or even the transformation of resurrection (e.g., Origen’s *Hom. 7 on Ps. 67* and Theodore of Mopsuestia). The Fathers may depict contemporary baptized Christians as “gods” and address them as such (particularly for the sake of a paraenetic challenge), or they may reflect an understanding that the title awaits the full glory of the world to come. Occasionally, as with Clement and perhaps Maximus, it appears that only an elite few will attain this ultimate glorification. The increasing attribution of the title to the “saints” toward the end of our period of study also suggests an increasing accommodation to the hierarchical spirituality which entered the church with the dramatic rise in the rate of

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<sup>101</sup> (Ps.-)Theodoret, *Quaest. respons. ad orth.* 146, 9–10.

<sup>102</sup> Reference to participation is very frequent, although not ubiquitous. This study found several references to the work of the Spirit: Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 16.29; *Comm. Rom.* 34.7.1.554; Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:1013); Athanasius, *C. Ar.* 1.9.2.3; Gregory of Elvira, *Frag. Gen.* 3, 22; Ambrose, *Fid.* 5.1, 48; Faustinus, *Trin.* 49, 3; Basil [Sp.?), *Eunom.* 5, *Spir.* 8.3; Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* (PG 60:525); Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus consubstantiali Trin.*; Pamphilus, *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio*, Quest. 9, 56. Several other passages depict the “gods” as those Christians who walk by the Spirit rather than by the flesh (cf., *Rom.* 8:5–11).

conversion from paganism.<sup>103</sup>

What characterizes the life of the “gods”? Having been restored to true humanity or perhaps elevated beyond mere human existence, their lives are characterized by various godly virtues. If human beings naturally speak falsehoods, they are truthful; if human beings cannot control their tongues, they can;<sup>104</sup> if human beings are avaricious, they are content. They live “according to God” and “by the Spirit,” thinking the thoughts of God. They love God and despise the things of this world.<sup>105</sup> For most authors, this is the ideal set before God’s people, an ideal of which some candidly admit that they themselves fall short. The Fathers take different approaches even in this question. Origen, on the one hand, confesses that since he and his audience are less than perfectly obedient they do not (yet) rank as “gods” and will have to die;<sup>106</sup> Verecundus, on the other hand, accepts that fallible human beings are currently called “gods” in a qualified way, for God alone is perfectly faithful.<sup>107</sup>

The church fathers can both detail how deified human beings surpass humanity and delimit how they never become equal to the one true God. When humanity is identified with vice, already the virtuous lives of the sanctified bring them into the super-human realm.<sup>108</sup> As super-

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<sup>103</sup> Many scholars note the correlation between the fourth-century influx into the church and the rise of the role of the saints, e.g., Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice*, 69. MacMullen tracks how popular pagan devotion to intermediary deities was transferred to the cult of the saints in this period. Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1997), 154. One might contrast this late predilection to identify the “saints” as “gods” with, for example, Cyril of Alexandria’s egalitarian approach in his general reading and application of Scripture. For Cyril, all baptized Christians had full access to all of spiritual gifts of Christ. Cf., Matthew R. Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria’s Trinitarian Theology of Scripture*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>104</sup> Scotus Anon., *Ep. Iac.*, 544.

<sup>105</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Soph.* 1, 159.

<sup>106</sup> Origen, *2<sup>nd</sup> Hom. Ps.* 38 (LXX 37; SC 411); cf., *Against Those Unwilling . . . Theotokos*, ACO 1.1.7.30. Maximus *Liber asceticus* 37, 45.

<sup>107</sup> Verecundus, *Super cantica*, Deut. 5, 62.

<sup>108</sup> Basil’s “gods” succeed in rising above the passions. *Hom. Ps.* 116 (LXX 115).

human beings already in this world, Christian “gods” may accomplish various “divine works”: miraculously transforming elements and recreating themselves as a temple for God;<sup>109</sup> overcoming attacks from humans and animals;<sup>110</sup> achieving works like Christ through faith and prayer.<sup>111</sup> Frequently the humans-become-gods are placed among the ranks of angels, becoming like them in holiness, in insight, and in their heavenly citizenship. One anonymous text even claims that the cross transforms human nature into an angelic one.<sup>112</sup> The full actualization of these “angelic” possibilities lies outside of this world and this present age, although the faithful practice of virginity foreshadows its realization. Naturally, Christ’s own word that those who attain to the world to come will “be like angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:30, ESV) underwrites this whole line of thought. Without specifying a likeness to angels, Peter Chrysologus teaches of an exalted heavenly nature for the “gods.”<sup>113</sup> In the glory to come, the “gods” will rise with heavenly bodies and live among the stars.<sup>114</sup>

In no place, however, do reflections on Psalm 82 (LXX 81) ever impinge upon the unique deity of God and of his Christ. God alone is the Creator and God by nature. If the divine name (“G/god”) is not unique to him, then his attributes, works, and honor set him apart. The self-sufficient Creator is alone to be worshipped, alone immortal in himself, alone invisible, alone omniscient, alone ineffable and incomprehensible.<sup>115</sup> He is at work converting the nations as only

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<sup>109</sup> John Chrysostom, *Exp. Ps.* (PG 55:148, 31).

<sup>110</sup> Ammonius, *Catena in Acta* (Catena Andreae) 409, 6.

<sup>111</sup> Didymus the Blind, *Frag. Ps.* 860, 4.

<sup>112</sup> *In exaltationem verandae crucis*, tract. 1, §4.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Chrysologus, *Collectio sermonum*, Sermon 10.

<sup>114</sup> Origen, *Hom. 15* on Ps. 77 (LXX 76); Gregory of Elvira, *Tract. Orig.* 1, 273.

<sup>115</sup> Stephen Parrish itemizes the standard list of divine attributes associated with classical theism: “The perfect being concept of God sees God as omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, necessarily existent, omnibenevolent, incomprehensible, transcendent, immanent, simple (in some sense), and infinite.” It is valuable to observe that the Church Fathers never credit deified humanity with any of these predications. Stephen E. Parrish, *Atheism? A Critical*

he can.<sup>116</sup> The Sonship of Christ, as a natural Sonship, also distinguishes him from those adopted sons who follow him. He alone shares in the Father's divinity by nature. The difference between God and the "gods" is ontological and, as the Nicene Christians argued against Arius, this necessitates a recognition of the difference between God the Son and the sons who are "gods." However glorified, the creation can never become equal to the Creator. It is hard to argue for even a single transgression of the Creator-creature divide among any of these authors as they comment on and employ Psalm 82 (LXX 81).

### **Pastoral Motivations for Citing Psalm 82:6**

Finally, we can briefly summarize the trajectories of patristic pastoral usage of Psalm 82:6 (81:6 LXX). Like a river broadening into a delta, the stream of tradition breaks into distinct branches of usage which are themselves capable of branching into new directions.

The ante-Nicene period reveals an expanding application of the Psalm in every passing generation. Marcion and the Naassenes present the first possibilities with two very distinct uses: the first as a statement about the nature of the true God and the second about the potential for human ascent to become a god by departure from this world. Understood broadly, these both anticipated subsequent Christian employments of the passage and, taken as misinterpretations, necessitated the Christian reference to the psalm if only to correct them. The earliest patristic applications (Justin, Irenaeus, Ps.-Hippolytus) appear to echo the usage among some of the rabbis in linking Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to the narrative of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve but, given their Christian commitments, they develop its implications regarding the salvation worked by Christ. In the west, reading Ps. 82:6 (81:6, LXX) in connection with John 10,

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*Analysis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 73.

<sup>116</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:1033, 28).

Tertullian, Cyprian, and Novatian use the passage to teach the deity of Christ and the nature of the Trinity. Clement and especially Origen develop the applications for the Christian life of discipleship. Among the early exegetes, Origen proves to be the most decisive for the directions of the subsequent tradition.

As Origen relates the Psalm to the whole of salvation history, the perlocutionary force of the references clearly shifts from a mere teaching about salvation to a call for the hearer to fully respond to Christ in repentance, in faith, and with a life of virtue and hope. He also extends the apologetic application of the text beyond the engagement with Jews and heretics to deploy it in conversation with the pagan world (*Cels.*). By identifying Christ as the divine Word who comes to deify (John 10:35), Origen establishes a clear Christological basis for categorizing humans as “gods” which will also bear much fruit in the subsequent reflection of the church about the nature of Christ.

In the fourth century, the motivations for citing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) shifted with the contextual changes of the life of the church. These included the increasingly intense dialogue with paganism, the conversion of the empire, and the emergence of the debate with Arianism.

The “gods” language of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) suggested to pagans and confused Christians that they might point to the Scriptures themselves to justify a rapprochement between Christianity and paganism.<sup>117</sup> The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* reacted against this possibility by affording no positive place to Psalm 82 (LXX 81), while the related *Recognitions* simply demythologized the text by identifying the “gods” as judges. The purpose in both of these texts

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<sup>117</sup> At least two movements suggested a plausible syncretism of Christianity and paganism—the increasingly monotheistic philosophies of the educated elite and the increasingly popular cult of Theos Hypsistos, which ascribed to God the very appellation of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6), “Most High.” Michael Frede, “Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity,” in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 67; Stephen Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos between Pagans, Jews, and Christians,” in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 126–27.

was simply to affirm a unitarian monotheism against polytheistic and idolatrous paganism, so there was no question of affirming the deity of Christ and distinguishing that deity from the status of Christians.

Among the Fathers, too, Eusebius, Athanasius, and Diodore promoted the recognition of the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as judges or leaders, a protreptic catechetical and missionary tactic which removes any question of there being “Gods” alongside the one true God. Some specified those “gods” as civil judges or ecclesiastical leaders (Eusebius, Athanasius, Diodore). Since the psalm declares that they are charged with the execution of justice but stand in risk of condemnation, it invites the church to reflect critically on the new demands brought about by the Constantinian revolution. Embued with divine authority, leaders in either sphere needed to heed their sacred calling and, rather than presuming that God-given leaders were acting in a God-pleasing way, Christians would have to discern whether they were being faithful or not. The overall strategy is clear: to safeguard monotheism, potentially confusing biblical texts about the “God of gods” could be explained as referring to a special category of human beings, even potentially to all the Christians themselves as the sanctified children of God.

The dominant issue of the fourth century, the Arian debate, moved many Fathers to clarify that Christ is not a “god” in the same sense as the gods of Psalm 82 (LXX 81). This was rejected as the Arian position (e.g., explicitly so by Hilary, Phoebadius, and Gregory of Elvira, though others, like Athanasius, implied the argument). Rather, Fathers like Epiphanius emphasized and elucidated the Creator-creature distinction, placing Christ clearly on the side of the Creator. Creatures could only be “gods” by participation in Christ, a fact which underscored all the more the necessarily true deity of Christ. This was more than a fine point of doctrine to be raised in the polemics of debate. These pastors and teachers believed that one must know the Savior as he is,

God come in the flesh, in order to receive his gifts of salvation and life.

The use of the Psalm for paraenesis did not disappear in the fourth century, though no authors emphasized it like Didymus the Blind. Indeed, Didymus carries forth the spirit of Origen in his description of the Christian life as a departure from the pattern of natural humanity and an ascent to a new state of spirituality. But others, too, employ Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in ways which amount to challenges for their hearers, as when Eusebius describes those who participate in Christ as lovers of God, when Zeno says that those who ascend are those who obey God's precepts, when Optatus argues that the baptized should be at peace with one another, or when Ambrosiaster concludes his depiction of the Great Exchange of salvation with an exhortation to join one's lot with the poor.<sup>118</sup> Thus, the psalm ever retained the possibility of effecting meaningful Christian exhortation.

In this century after Origen had laid the foundation for scholarly biblical studies, the growth of the commentary tradition notably shapes various references to Psalm 82 (LXX 81). Thus, we find Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) exegeted in commentaries on the Psalms by Eusebius, Athanasius (dub.), Hilary, Diodore, and Didymus; it is also linked with other passages of Scripture, sometimes in other commentaries, simply to explain questions in the text. As a result, the psalm is brought to bear on a range of biblical stories simply for the sake of resolving problems in the text without clear reference to the central narrative of salvation in Christ. Yet, even such resolutions often play out to the benefit of a theological anthropology which depicts humanity as weak, mortal, sinful, and in need of salvation, because humans are no longer "gods" but rather "die like human beings" and "fall like a prince."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Comm. Ps.* on 84:8 (LXX 83:9); Zeno of Verona, *Tract.* 1.37, 95; Optatus, *C. Parmenianum Donatistam* 4.2.2, 19; Ambrosiaster *Comm. ep. Pauli* on 2 Cor. 8:9.

<sup>119</sup> E.g., humanity as "flesh" in Eusebius, *Comm. Ps.* (PG 23:497); as mortal in Athanasius, *Inc.* 4.6.8; as

The period from the Cappadocians through Augustine sees the pendulum swing back from Christological and theological applications of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to an emphasis on practical depictions and exhortations of the Christian life. At times, the Christological arguments about the difference between the Son and the sons can yet be heard (Chrysostom, Severian, Paulinus, Augustine), even as the nature of that argument is extended to defend the deity of the Holy Spirit (Faustinus, [Ps.-]Basil's *De Spiritu*) to meet the pneumatomachian crisis. More typically, we see how the institutionalization of the ascetic spirit within the church has left its mark on exegetes like Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine, with their calls to respond to the Gospel message with a devoted life of virtue. The clear catechetical context continues in evidence with Asterius and Nyssa who link the divine status of the believer to the gifts of baptism, the former extolling the amazing gifts that come to believers in the "Great Exchange" with Christ and the latter warning his hearers not to presume a divine transformation if their lives are not accompanied by the works of faith.

The distinct character of the Antiochene school appeared in the interpretation of Diodore, who fully located the meaning of the Psalm in its Old Testament context. Standing in the commentary tradition, his desire is simply to explain the fundamental meaning of the text so that the church may know her Scriptures. Theodore could do this, too, but he could also read the passage, like Augustine, as an eschatological reference to the Christian's ultimate hope.

It was in this period, we suggested, that Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) took on a new function in the conversion of the pagans. Rather than "demythologizing" the "gods" language of Scripture so as to remove possible polytheistic misinterpretations (Origen's *C. Cels.*, *Recognitiones*, Augustine's *Civ.*), Gregory of Nyssa in particular seems to enlist the verse for its potential in casting

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deceived and deceitful in Ambrose, *Parad.* 13.61.

Christianity as the fulfillment of Neoplatonic hopes for union with God. Thus, he adds a missionary motive to the exegetical and paraenetic purposes of this period. According to some interpretations of Nonnus, he would later take this a step further to erase the distinction between Christianity and paganism.

Finally, some in this period (*Const. ap.*, Filastrius, Jerome) read the “gods” of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) in such a way that reinforces the authority of bishops, prophets, and the proclaimers of the Word in general. They in particular deserve to be honored as “gods.” The hierarchy of the church and the structures of human mediation between God and humanity are thus inscribed into the reading of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6). This kind of interpretation continues into the final periods of this study. Both Cyril and Theodoret, however much they may disagree about other matters, easily apply Ps. 82 (LXX 81) to judges and priests as ways to explain the presence of “gods” in the Sacred Scriptures. For some, like the author of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, one may also discern a motive to promote a proper reverence for the authorities of the church. The concern for rightly respecting civil leaders finds later examples in Gregory the Great and Isidore of Spain.

The eruption of the Christological debate between Cyril and Nestorius led to even further employment of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) as a contrast with the unique Sonship of Jesus, but Cyril’s commentaries reveal that he was already predisposed to such usage. This Christological application will not disappear, as Fulgentius demonstrates. Even the need to cite Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to verify that there is only one true God continues unabated to the end of this study (e.g., Verecundus, Pamphilus, Isidore of Seville, and Scotus Anonymus). Recognizing the different senses of the title “G/god,” first asserted by Marcion and Irenaeus, remains a helpful strategy through to the later Fathers (Junilius, *C. philosophos*, Cassiodorus).

If the fifth-century polemics and commentaries primarily cast Ps. 81:6 (LXX 82:6) into an

explanatory and didactic key—detailing the nature of Christ or of the Christian life or the role of leaders in the church and world—the sixth century actualized again the potential for a direct spiritual application of the psalm. Barsanuphius’s counsel, Theognius’s sermon, and Maximus’s ascetic treatise incorporate Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) in pastoral charges to purify one’s heart, welcome Christ, and put aside all hypocrisy. Nevertheless, the didactic citations in the commentaries continued (Procopius, Cassiodorus, Cassiodorus’s disciple, Verecundus, Primasius), even as the commentary tradition shifted into new modes with instructional books (Pamphilus, Maximus, Isidore of Seville).

### **Final Thoughts**

Having traced and described the applications of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) through the first six centuries of church history, we have discovered a wide range of uses—polemical and paraenetic; eschatological and evangelistic; Christological and catechetical; ascetic and apologetic. The outstanding question is whether such previous traditional usages could awaken any new deployments of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) for ministry today.

Granted, much of the patristic employment of the psalm found assistance in the philosophical thought structures of the day. Also, modern exegetical methods which seek first to identify the meaning of the text in its original historical context, as important as that is, can leave today’s exegete at a loss for how to apply that message to contemporary needs. People today, after all, do not trouble themselves with the thought that the injustice of the gods accounts for the injustice of their world. At the same time, permutations of the very questions which the Fathers sought to address with Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) are reappearing in aspects of contemporary movements—the polytheism of Mormonism, the erasure of the Creator-creature distinction in contemporary spirituality, the denial of the deity of Christ in liberal theology, and the

redefinition of humanity asserted by the transgender movement, to name a few. In the face of similar problems, the church fathers employed Psalm 82 (LXX 81) to unlock a rich treasure trove of resources for their teaching and preaching. In short, they could find the whole of the Scriptural narrative reflected in the psalm because they read the psalm in the light of that narrative. “God standing among the gods” became Christ among his saints or among his accusers. The injustice of the gods found its fulfillment in Christ’s rejection by the Jewish leaders. The declaration, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High,” represented the creation of humanity with its initial immortality as well as humanity’s restoration effected through the work of Christ and by the Spirit of God. “But you will die like a human being and fall like one of the princes” pointed to the origin of sin in the devil’s temptations as well as the correlation between human sin and human mortality. Finally, the call for God to arise and judge the earth and take the nations as his inheritance concluded the psalm with the world-wide promulgation of the faith and the ultimate return of Christ to bring his own divine glory to his faithful. The human creature, precisely as a creature made under God with the potential for transcendence, finds that potential actualized only in the salvation God achieves through Christ.

The Fathers held to the conviction that the Holy Spirit yet speaks through this challenging text, and so they boldly endeavored to discover that message for their hearers and readers. Their zealous model of exegesis for the sake of the Gospel should inspire pastors today to reflect again on how this verse can prove “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6)—it is a word which God is yet saying and speaking to us.

## APPENDIX ONE

### Previously Untranslated Patristic Texts

The following 122 texts could not be found in English (in a few instances, not found in easily accessible texts). Translations are offered here in roughly chronological order:

Author	Relevant citation	Publication of relevant citation (original and translation)
1. (Ps.-)Hippolytus	<i>In Valentinianos</i> (= <i>De resurrectione et incorruptibilitate?</i> )	Pitra, <i>Analecta Sacra</i> 4:68, 335 (from Latin)
2. Origen	<i>Homily 1 on Psalm 16 (LXX 15)</i> 5, 6	GCS New Series, 19
3. Origen	<i>Homily 1 on Psalm 82 (LXX 81)</i>	GCS New Series, 19:509–23
4. Origen	<i>Selecta in Ezechielem</i>	PG 13:769, 23–39
5. Origen	<i>Hom. 7 on Ps. 68 (LXX 67)</i> .5, 27– 49	GCS New Series, 19
6. Origen	<i>Hom. 15 on Psalm 77 (LXX 76)</i> .5, 12–6, 2	GCS New Series, 19
7. Origen (Dub.)	<i>Selecta in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 4:2 (LXX 4:3)	PG 12:1137, 1140
8. Origen (Dub.)	<i>Selecta in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 5:4–5 (LXX 5:5–6)	PG 12:1169, 12–29
9. Origen (Dub.)	<i>Selecta in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 136: 2 (LXX 135:2)	PG:12.1655, 51–1656, 13
10. Origen (Dub.)	<i>Scholia in Lucam</i> on Luke 14:12–24	PG 17:364, 31–365, 2
11. Ps.-Marius Victorinus	<i>De physicis</i> 15	PL 8:1303–4
12. Eusebius	<i>Commentaria in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 56:11 (LXX 55:12)	PG 23:497, 52–500, 2
13. Eusebius of Caesarea	<i>Commentaria in Psalmos</i> on Psalm 82 (LXX 81)	PG 23:981–91
14. Eusebius	<i>Commentaria in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 84:8 (LXX 83:9)	PG 23:1012, 45–1013, 11
15. Eusebius	<i>Commentaria in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 86:8 (LXX 85:8)	PG 23:1033, 14–51
16. Eusebius	<i>Commentaria in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 89:6 (LXX 88:7)	PG 23:1084, 16–34
17. Cyril of Jerusalem	<i>Catecheses ad illuminandos</i> 11.4, 12	Reischl and Rupp, <i>Opera</i>
18. (Ps.-)Athanasius	<i>Expositio in Psalmum</i> on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1)	PG 27:229, 38–45
19. (Ps.-)Athanasius	<i>Expositio in Psalmum</i> on Ps. 82 (LXX 81)	PG 27:364, 55–365, 24
20. Ps.-Athanasius	<i>Liber de definitionibus</i>	PG 28:536, 31–36 CCSG 8
21. Ps.-Athanasius	<i>Quaestiones aliae</i>	PG 28:773, 41–45

22. Ps.-Athanasius	<i>Sermo in annuntiationem Deiparae</i>	PG 28:932, 54–933, 24
23. Ps.-Athanasius	<i>Homilia in occursum Domini</i>	PG 28:977, 8–25
24. Ps.-Athanasius	<i>Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos</i>	PG 28:1292, 43–1293, 13
25. Ps.-Athanasius	<i>Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos</i>	PG 28:1297, 35–54
26. Zeno of Verona	<i>Tractatus</i> 1.37	CCSL 22:95, 91–119
27. Hilary of Poitiers	<i>Tractatus super Psalmos</i> Ps. 135 (LXX 134).148, 5	CCSL 61B:689, 20–700, 14
28. Hilary of Poitiers	<i>Tractatus super Psalmos</i> Ps. 136 (LXX 135).5–6	CCSL 61B:716, 11–718, 1
29. Gregory of Elvira	<i>Tractatus Origenis</i> , tract. 1.24–27	CCSL 69:10, 255–11, 289
30. Gregory of Elvira	<i>Tractatus Origenis</i> , tract. 6.2–4	CCSL 69:43, 12–44, 34
31. Gregory of Elvira	<i>Frag. tractatus in Genesim</i> 3, 22 ln 16	CCSL 69
32. Gregory of Elvira	<i>De fide orthodoxa contra Arianos</i>	PL 20:34–35; CCSL 69
33. Basil	<i>Homilia in Psalmum</i> 116 (LXX 115)	PG 30:108, 48–109, 8
34. (Ps.-)Basil	<i>Adversus Eunomium</i> 5 = <i>De Spiritu</i> Ep. 8.3	PG 29:769, 33–772, 41 = Henry, <i>Études plotiniennes I</i> , 189–195
35. (Ps.-)Basil	<i>De virginitate</i>	PG 30:776B
36. Ambrose	<i>De fide</i> 2.13, 32–38	Fontes Christiani, 47:334
37. Ambrose	<i>De fide</i> 5.1, 42–48	Fontes Christiani, 47:602–3
38. (Ps.-)Didymus the Blind	<i>De Trinitate</i> 2.5.4	Seiler, Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 52:76
39. (Ps.-)Didymus	<i>De Trinitate</i> 3	PG 39:821, 26–44
40. (Ps.-)Didymus	<i>De Trinitate</i> 3.9.16	PG 39:865, 10–868, 7
41. (Ps.-)Didymus	<i>De Trinitate</i> 3.24	PG 39:936, 39–940, 12.
42. (Ps.-)Didymus	<i>Commentarii in Psalmos</i> on Ps. 31 (LXX 30)	Gronewald, <i>Psalmenkommentar</i> , pt. 3, 150, 27–151, 7
43. Didymus	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag. 63 on Ps. 9:19 (LXX 9:20)	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 1:155, 13–28
44. Didymus	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag. 633 on Ps. 62:9 (LXX 61:10)	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:39
45. Didymus	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag. 801 on Ps. 77:14a (LXX 76:15a)	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:124, 1–15
46. Didymus	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag. 836–39 on Psalm 82 (LXX 81)	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:143–45
47. Didymus	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag. 860 on Ps. 86:8 (LXX Ps. 85:8)	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> 2:155–56
48. Didymus	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag. 896	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> , 2:178–79

49. Didymus	<i>Frag. in Psalmos</i> Frag. 1195	Mühlenberg, <i>Psalmenkommentare</i> , 2:318
50. Didymus	<i>Commentarii in Ecclesiasten</i> 41.1 on Eccl. 2:8	Binder and Liesenborghs, PTA 25.194
51. Didymus	<i>Commentarii in Ecclesiasten</i> 199.10 on Eccl. 7:2	Kramer and Krebber, PTA 16.10
52. Didymus	<i>Commentarii in Ecclesiasten</i> 219.27 on Eccl. 7:20	Kramer and Krebber, PTA 16.27
53. Theodore of Mopsuestia	<i>Fragmenta in epistulam ad Romanos</i> on Rom. 8:19	Staab 138, 29–37
54. Ammonius	<i>Catena in Acta (catena Andreae)</i>	Cramer, <i>Catena Graecorum partum in N.T.</i> , 3:409, 3–13 CCSL 9
55. Filastrius Brixiensis	<i>Diversarum hereseon</i> , liber 147, 1–30	CCSL 9
56. John Chrysostom [sp.]	<i>Synopsis scripturae sacrae</i>	PG 56:318, 6–13
57. John Chrysostom [sp.]	<i>In exaltationem verandae crucis</i>	PG 59:679, 65, 76–680, 10
58. John Chrysostom [sp.]	<i>De non iudicando proximo</i>	PG 60:764, 51–70
59. John Chrysostom [sp.]	<i>In publicanum et pharisaeum</i>	PG 62:725, 62–726, 6
60. Asterius “Ignotus”	<i>Homily</i> 21.26–28	Kinzig 2:376–77
61. Asterius “Ignotus”	<i>Homily</i> 30.5–9	Kinzig 2:494–95
62. Paulinus of Nola	<i>Epistulae</i> , Ep. 23.44	CSEL 29.198–99
63. Jerome	<i>Comm. in Epistulam ad Ephesios</i> 2	PL 26:510, 35–43
64. Jerome	<i>Commentarioli in Psalmos</i> , Ps. 82 (LXX 81)	CCSL 72
65. Augustine	<i>Adnotationes in Iob</i> 1.38, 10	CSEL 28/2
66. Ps.-Augustine	<i>Solutiones diversarum quaestionum</i> 1, 49–64	CCSL 90
67. Ps.-Augustine	<i>Liber de divinis scripturis sive Speculum</i> 128	CSEL 12:675–76
68. Cyril of Alexandria	<i>De sancta Trinitate dialogi</i> Aubert 414, 32–415, 4	SC 231
69. Cyril	<i>De sancta Trinitate dialogi</i> Aubert 487, 35–488, 11	SC 237
70. Cyril	<i>De sancta Trinitate dialogi</i> Aubert 498, 19–499, 7	SC 237
71. Cyril	<i>De sancta Trinitate dialogi</i> Aubert 520, 1–44	SC 237
72. Cyril	<i>De sancta Trinitate dialogi</i> Aubert 589, 1–11	SC 237
73. Cyril	<i>Expositio in Psalmos</i>	PG 69:1204, 48–1205, 25
74. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75:45, 1–38
75. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75:124, 48–125, 27
76. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75:189, 13–38

77. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75:217, 30–51
78. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75:317, 46–320, 14
79. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75: 325, 3–29
80. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75:540, 8–29
81. Cyril	<i>Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate</i>	PG 75:556, 41–52
82. Cyril	<i>Contra Julianum</i> 8.4, 23–8.5, 15	GCS New Series 21:537
83. Cyril	<i>Contra Julianum</i> 9.3, 16–9.4, 18	GCS New Series 21
84. Cyril of Alexandria [sp.]	<i>Dialogus cum Nestorio</i> 2.557	PG 76:249, 4–252, 2
85. Mark the Monk	<i>De Melchisedech</i> 10, 18–46	SC 455
86. [Maximinus?] <i>Collectio Veronensis</i>	<i>Contra Iudaeos</i> 13.1–5	CCSL 87:113–15
87. Theodoret [dub.] (also “Pseudo-Justin”)	<i>Quaest. et respons. ad orthodoxos</i> 145, 16–146, 11,	Papadopoulos-Kerameus (1895)
88. Acts of the Council of Ephesus	<i>Against Nestorius</i>	ACO 1.1.5.30, 10–19
89. Acts of the Council of Ephesus	<i>Against Nestorius</i>	ACO 1.1.6.65, 10–36
90. Acts of the Council of Ephesus	<i>Against Nestorius</i>	ACO 1.1.6.92, 14–25
91. (Ps.-)Cyril	<i>Against Those Unwilling to Confess that the Holy Virgin is the Theotokos</i>	ACO 1.1.7.30, 7–28
92. Ps.-Basil of Seleucia	<i>Sermones xli</i> , serm. 23	PG 85:273, 36–276, 5
93. Isidore of Pelusium	<i>Epistulae</i> 3.31	PG 78:1–29
94. Isidore of Pelusium	<i>Epistulae</i> 3.237	PG 78:2–24
95. Ps.-Hesychius of Jerusalem	<i>Commentarius brevis</i> Ps. 50 (LXX 49) §1, 1–4	Jagic (1917) (TLG)
96. Ps.-Hesychius of Jerusalem	<i>Commentarius brevis</i> Ps. 136 (LXX 135) §2, 1–6	Jagic (1917) (TLG)
97. Ps.-Hesychius of Jerusalem	<i>Commentarius in Psalmos</i> 77–99 on Psalm 82 (LXX 81)	PG 55:731, 29–732, 2; 732, 24–68
98. Arnobius the Younger	<i>Commentarii in Psalmos</i> , Psalm 82 (LXX 81), 1–33	CCSL 25
99. Gennadius I	<i>Frag. in epistulam ad Romanos</i>	Staab (1933):377, 21–29

100. Ps.-Gelasius of Cyzicus	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 2.8.1–4	GCS, New Series 9:42
101. Cyril of Alexandria	<i>Catena in Joannem</i> 303, 30–37	Cramer, <i>Catena Graecorum partum in N.T.</i> , vol. 2 (1841) (TLG)
102. Theognius	<i>Homilia in Ramos palamarum</i> §7, 1–12	Noret, <i>Analecta Bollandiana</i> 89 (TLG)
103. Procopius of Gaza (=Didymus)	<i>Comm. in Genesim</i> 3.13, 23–35	GCS, New Series 22:153
104. Procopius of Gaza	<i>Comm. in Genesim</i> 6.1, 1–21	GCS, New Series 22:188–89
105. Procopius of Gaza (=Didymus)	<i>Comm. in Genesim</i> 6.3, 34–44	GCS, New Series 22:192
106. Procopius of Gaza	<i>Comm. in Genesim</i> 17.1, 35–46	GCS, New Series 22:239
107. Anonymous	<i>C. philosophos</i> , disp. 4, 1238–301	CCSL 58A:237–38
108. “Disciple of Cassiodorus”	<i>Exp. St. Pauli Epistulae ad 1 Cor.</i> 8	PL 68:525, 47–58
109. Verecundus of Junca	<i>Comm. cantica eccl.</i> , <i>Cant. Deut.</i> , 5, 51–65	CCSL 93:20
110. Primasius	<i>Commentarius in Apocalypsin</i> 5.21, 123–34	CCSL 92:289–90
111. Gregory the Great	<i>Homiliae in Hiezechihelam</i> 2.3, 132–50	CCSL 142:241
112. Pamphilus	<i>Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio</i> , Question 9, 44–59	CCSG 19:24
113. Isidore of Seville	<i>Etymologiarum siue Originum, libri XX</i> 7.4.6–12	Lindsay, <i>Etymologiarum</i>
114. Isidore of Seville	<i>Sententiae</i> 3.39.4–6	CCSL 3.281–82
115. Scotus Anonymus	<i>Comm. Epistolas Catholicas, Ep. Iacobi</i> , 543–50	CCSL 108B.16
116. Ps.-Hilary of Arles	<i>Tract. septem Ep. Catholicas, Ep. 2 Petri</i> , 26–39	CCSL 108B.99
117. Anonymus	<i>Glossa Psalmorum</i> on Ps. 47:9 (LXX 46:10)	Vetus Latina (Cetedoc) 1.199, 5
118. Anonymus	<i>Glossa Psalmorum</i> on Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1)	Vetus Latina (Cetedoc) 1.207, 3–7
119. Anonymus	<i>Glossa Psalmorum</i> on Ps. 82:1, 6–8 (LXX 81:1, 6–8)	Vetus Latina (Cetedoc) 1.370, 1–20; 372, 1–373, 7
120. Anonymus	<i>Glossa Psalmorum</i> on Ps. 83:1 (LXX 82:2)	Vetus Latina (Cetedoc) 1.373, 1–3
121. Anonymus	<i>Glossa Psalmorum</i> on Ps. 95:3 (LXX 94:3)	Vetus Latina (Cetedoc) 1.434, 1–7
122. Anonymus	<i>Glossa Psalmorum</i> on Ps. 136:2 (LXX 135:2)	Vetus Latina (Cetedoc) 2.174, 1–5
123. Ps.-Marcellus	<i>Epistle 2 ad Maxentius</i>	PL 7:1098A–B

**1. (Ps.-)Hippolytus: *In Valentinianos*, Pitra, *Analecta Sacra* 4:335 (from Latin)**

*In contrast to the Valentinians who posit an inherent fallenness in creation (implying a fault in the Creator), this author extols the original work of God and traces sin and death to human disobedience.*

(1) Because God made the human being immortal and mortal, some of the Fathers could say that the human being was immortal as they attended to what Scripture says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), or to that which Wisdom says most pointedly, “Since God did not make death nor does he rejoice in the perdition of the living” (Wisd. of Sol. 1:13) and “God made the human being incorruptible” (Wisd. of Sol. 2:22). “By the devil’s envy then death entered into the world” (Wisd. of Sol. 2:24). From these passages, it is clear—for so the Fathers argue—that the human being before he ate of the fruit of the tree was not going to die. Thus, they say, he was neither immortal nor mortal but capable of both life and death.

(2) Others, on the contrary, contend that the human being was created mortal and a sinner so that God was responsible for death as much as for human sin. This is truly abhorrent! But indeed no one says such things except the foolish Valentinians who associate sin with nature and birth, since even they declare that [only] he who is without sin is immortal.

**2. Origen: *Homily 1 on Psalm 16* (LXX 15) §5, 1–13**

*Origen identifies self-sufficiency as a unique trait of the Most High God.*

“You are my Lord because you have no need of my good things” Ps. 16:2 (LXX 15:2). There are many gods, as the Apostle says, and many lords but even if there are many gods, “for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist”; even if there are many lords, but for us there is “one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are and

through whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:5–6 ESV). And among the many gods are also they to whom the Word says, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Although there are many gods, this one Lord whom even the Savior names Lord as he thus calls him Father is unique alongside the many lords. For the other lords have need of the good things which those under them bring to them, but this Lord alone has no need of those over whom he is lord. Therefore, the Savior speaks to the Lord his Father in such a way that he is referring to something unique: “I said to my Lord, You are my Lord because you have no need of my good things” (Ps. 16:2, LXX 15:2). Therefore, you are my Lord because you have no need of my good things for you experience no need of them.

### **3. Origen: *Homily 1 on Psalm 82*, GCS 19 NS:509–23**

*Origen’s spiritual interpretation of the Psalm 82 (LXX 81) emphasizes the call of God to true discipleship in the likeness of Christ even as it grants that the current human condition follows only failingly.*

[509] (1) Every disciple has the aim to become like his teacher and the servant’s goal is to become as his Lord and “it is enough for a disciple to become as his teacher and the servant as his lord” (Matt. 10:25). This is why the teacher came to make his disciples like himself, as much as this depended on him; and the Lord has visited us not to keep [us as] his servants but to make his servants as the Lord himself is. Moreover, our teacher, Christ Jesus, is God. So, if “it is enough for a disciple to become as his teacher,” the disciple’s goal is to become a christ from Christ and a god from God and to learn from the light of the world. Everything which the Savior is he calls his disciples, too: “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), he tells them after having first said “I am the Light of the world” (John 8:12). And as the Christ he says: “Do not touch my christ and do not harm my prophets” (1 Chron. 16:22; Ps. 104:15, LXX 105:15).

[510] This is the “assembly,” then, if we truly gather, if we do not live in a human way, if we do not sow to the flesh what God says “you reap to corruption” (Gal. 6:8) and we do not do the works of the flesh but produce the fruit of the spirit. It is not an assembly of human beings but an “assembly of gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). The devil cannot do anything, but God visits and, visiting, he stands in the midst of the assembly of the gods. Thus, it has been said: “God stood in the assembly of the gods.” But what makes us human beings such that, [511] having fallen from divinity, we lose the gift which calls us to become gods? What makes human beings? Listen to Paul speaking about the smallest of sins: “Indeed, from where do jealousy and strife arise among you? Are you not fleshly and walking in a human way?” (1 Cor. 3:3) He even adds: “Are you not human beings?” (1 Cor. 3:4) Indeed, has he not all but cried out at that place and said: “The Word has called you to be gods, but because of such and such deeds you are human beings”? And here it says appropriately, “I said, ‘You are god and sons of the Most High, all of you, but you’”—I do not see you doing things worthy of divinity. He adds and says, “Behold, now you die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). One must receive with one’s whole soul the gift of God coming into us which makes us gods. We sinners do not receive it, but casting away and rejecting divinity we receive the thoughts of the flesh, doing the works of the flesh. We do not do what we should, which is to put to death the deeds of the flesh by the spirit (Rom. 8:13).

[512] Indeed, when the deeds of the body are put to death so that deeds of the body no longer exist in us, then we have been deified. God the Word, once he is in a soul, makes the receptive soul god. For if a little leaven leavens all the loaf (1 Cor. 5:6), what must be said about the small and insignificant bit of leaven of the deifying Word other than that this, being in the soul, leavens all the loaf of the human being to divinity and the whole human becomes god? For

the kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three of measures of flour until the whole was leavened (Matt. 13:33, Luke 13:21). Accordingly, the three measures are the spirit, the soul, and the body of the human being. The leaven came from the woman, that is, from the church which has received Christ, and this leaven, by entering into the three measures, leavened all this loaf and has made the human being to become wholly god.

But it is no wonder if he has deified the spirit in us, since it is akin to God [or a god], since even the incorruptible spirit is in all. But it is a marvel that the soul has been deified, so that it no longer sins, with the result that it no longer dies. For “the soul that sins will die” (Ezek. 18:4). But this is most marvelous of all, that he even deified the body,<sup>1</sup> so that he is no longer flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15:50) but it has become conformed to the glorious body (Phil. 3:21) of Christ Jesus and what has been deified has been received in glory in [513] heaven, as it has been said: “We will be snatched up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and thus we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17), having become gods, with God standing in the midst of our assembly—Jesus Christ.

2. On the one hand, God judges those on the outside, but God does not judge those on the inside. He does something better than judgment for those on the inside, if they are found to be gods. What is better? Hear what the prophet says: “God stood in the assembly of gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). It is just as if a king on a celebratory day wishes to reward each of those worthy of honor. We do not properly call such an action “judgment” but “distinction,” as one might say for instance: “These one hundred are worthy of honor from me, but these first two are of surpassing rank. Furthermore, these eight (or

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably the past tense reality of deification has taken place in the flesh of the risen Christ; thus, he likewise provides the paradigm of the deified soul.

however many) are of second rank; these are less than the more exalted stewards and those remaining ones are less than these second stewards.” And so the king descends by degrees of honor to the one being worthy of the lesser honor in order to reward him with the inferior honor and acceptance rather than with such higher honors.

I understand the text to be about some such festal day of reward for the elect angels, when God rewards them. I think that after the judgment, [514] after the sentence, after the sinners are punished, after all those things have happened to them, God receives the assembly of the gods and he evaluates them as he receives them. First, one is worthy to rise with the resurrection as a sun's, another one is worthy to rise with a resurrection as a moon's, and some are worthy a resurrection as of the stars with their different degrees of brightness (1 Cor. 15:41). But some are worthy a resurrection as of inferior stars but not the last ones, and some are even worthy of this heaven but they do not merit the dimmer resurrection of stars; they rise inferior to the rest. Thus, when such things take place, “God stood in the assembly of the gods, in their midst he distinguishes among gods.”

3. It is usual for God the Word, even if he once lifts us up and exalts us by his promises, for him to punish us again for our sins and to remind us that “such things were said as a promise to those who are worthy, but you are bad.” For example, it could be said to me, “You are unworthy of the promises; therefore, I am rebuking you for such and such sins.” Some such thing has also happened here. After “God stood in the assembly of the gods, in their midst he distinguishes among gods,” those who are not gods are rebuked such that they die as human beings in the midst of the assembly of the gods. These are the ones worthy of reprimands.

Let us take heed that we never be the “not gods” in the midst of the assembly of the blessed even while those exemplary gods are with us. May it not be said to us, “How long do you judge

unjustly and receive the appearances of sinners?” (Ps. 82:2; LXX 81:2) He asks, “If you judge, why do judge unjustly and in your unjust judgment receive the appearances of sinners? For if there are two being judged—a sinful rich man and a just poor man—you receive the appearance of the sinner on account of his wealth and you prefer the sinner to the just poor.” And this sin takes place a great deal among us wretched human beings. We are accustomed to prefer those who rank higher according to the world rather than according to God, and those who rank higher according to God we disdain and disparage. Thus to the degree we commit these sins, God asks, “How long are you judging unjustly and receiving the appearances of sinners?”

[515] In addition to what has already been said, it is also possible to add more about “you receive the appearances of sinners” (Ps. 82:2, LXX 81:2). It is just as those on a stage for a play: they take the masks with which they have practiced, now a king’s, now a servant’s, now a wife’s, now of some other kind. One can see how those competing in theatrical performances take masks. It seems to me that such a thing takes place on the stage of the world. For all of us actors are always putting on masks. If we are blessed we take such a face as God’s and we say, “I have begotten sons and exalted them but they rejected me” (Isa. 1:2). Again, if we are just, we receive the face of Christ and, although we are human beings, we say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me; he sent me to preach good news to the poor” (Isa. 61:1, Luke 4:18). So also, according to the Scripture, a just person puts on an unjust face, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you harden your hearts” (Ps. 95:8, LXX 94:8). The one possessed [ἐνθουσιῶν from ἐνθουσιαζῶ] by [516] angelic power receives the face of a holy angel, as someone says, “The angel of the spirit who speaks in me.”<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, one can see someone receives the face of the devil and another that of

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<sup>2</sup> Cf., *Herm. Mand.* 11.9.

the antichrist and another that of a demon. Or doesn't it seem to you that the man gone raving mad bears the face of another person? So, the passions work their effects: anger, grief, evil desire, and the rest of those sins. Therefore, we receive the face of God if we are angels, but sometimes the face of grief or sometimes the face of the spirit of immorality. And we human beings are always changing faces, whether we sin according to the [various] forms of sins or whether we keep on the straight and narrow and do the better things, in accordance with the dignity of one who is becoming good. Why do I say these things? Because of the phrase, "You receive the faces of sinners." If you want to receive a face, take the face of God, take the face of Christ. Say, "Or do you seek the proof of the Christ who is speaking in me?" (2 Cor. 13:3).

4. Because we are censured for our sins it is also said to us at the first, "Judge for the orphan and the poor, and establish justice for the meek and the day-laborer. Rescue the worker and the poor, save them from the sinner's hand." (Ps. 82:3-4, LXX 81:3-4). You notice that since the human race suffers from feelings of contempt toward the poor the apostles joined their right hands so that they would be mindful of the poor, as it is written in the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 2:9-10). The Scripture addresses us continually, "Judge for the orphan and establish justice for the widow. Come let us reason together" (Isa. 1:17-18) and again here, "Judge for the orphan and the widow, and establish justice for the meek and the day-laborer" (Ps. 82:3, LXX 81:3). [517] Render such justice to the humble, to the laborer; "rescue the worker and the poor." If you ever see a worker suffering wrong, make it your own concern. Stand by him because he suffers wrong. He is being looked down on because of his poverty but the right is on his side. Often he owns something but his possession is lost due to our hesitation, although we had been able to defend him.

It says about such things, "Establish justice for the meek and the day-laborer. Rescue the

worker and the poor, save them from the sinner's hand." Therefore, it is good for us to rescue the worker and the poor from the sinner's hand, since with the measure we use it will be measured out to us in return (Luke 6:38). And by this measure God will redeem us who are poor, for that is what we are before God. For he will say, "As you did for the poor, I also do for you; as you did for the humble, I also do for you. You are all humble and you are all poor before me—human beings and the rest of the powers alike." It is good to stand by the helpless so that in this way we may become the sons of God. The most wise Judith speaks to God in prayer: "You are the God of the humble, you are the helper of the least, the protector of the weak, the shelter of the despairing, the savior of the hopeless, yes, yes, Lord God" (Jth. 9:11–12). While these titles refer to God, it is possible to be zealous to become an imitator of God so that I might become a son of the Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:45).

5. Then it is said about the sinners: "They did not know nor did they understand. They walk about in darkness" (Ps. 82:5, LXX 81:5). Those walking about in physical darkness, for example, walking at night or in a dark house, have darkness outside of themselves. But if by chance they are righteous, they are illumined within, even if they are benighted on the outside. But sinners walk about in the darkness. What kind of darkness? The inner darkness. For it is dark within them. "Thus, if the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness?" (Matt. 6:23) You see that the Savior too said that anyone who has a darkened light in himself is darkness. How much greater is the darkness of the dark? It is thus necessary to expel the darkness within. We cast out the darkness from the soul if we hear Jesus [518] as he says, "Let your loins stay girded and your lamps burning" (Luke 12:35). If the lamp in me is burning and I place it on the lampstand of the tent of the witness (both the tent is in me and the witness is in me) (Exod. 27:21), in the places inaccessible to human beings but where only the high priest has authority to enter (Heb. 9:11–

12), the darkness will flee. That's what happened in the tent of witness. It was dark at that time. "For, he says, burn the lamp continuously from evening until morning, lest there ever be darkness in the tent." But you are a tent. We who are in the tent groan since we are burdened (2 Cor. 5:4). Take heed, then, so that this tent is always illuminated and receive the five maidens (Matt. 25:1–11), that is, the sense perceptions in you. Give them oil. Light their lamps, so that you do not walk in darkness like the sinners about whom it is written, "They do not know nor do they understand. They walk about in darkness" (Ps. 82:5, LXX 81:5).

6. If we do not repent, it is said, "All the foundations of the earth will shake" (Ps. 82:5, LXX 81:5). There is a certain foundation which is not on the earth nor of earth but, if one must say it, it is a foundation of heaven. For no one is able to lay another foundation than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). This foundation is not a foundation of earth but a foundation of heaven. "In wisdom God laid the foundation [519] of the earth and he established the heavens with understanding" (Prov. 3:19). We know from the Scripture that God established the foundations of the heavens. There are foundations which are of earth and foundations of heaven. Christ Jesus is a foundation of heaven and those who imitate him are foundations of heaven, about whom it is written: "Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with our Lord Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). This then is what should be said concerning the word of truth and the mysteries of salvation.

But if you want to see those who are the foundations of the earth, look, I say, at the words of the heretics and those outside of the church. Look, I say, at the words of the Jews who do not grant that Jesus is Christ. All their foundations are on the earth and when foundations are on the earth, they speak from the earth (John 3:31). Consequently, the heavens do not hear them. Therefore, "all the foundations of the earth will be shaken" (Ps. 82:5, LXX 81:5), for all will be

overturned, all will be uprooted. And who is the one shaking the foundations of the earth except the one who has received the words of God? Let God also speak to me: “Behold, I have placed my words into your mouth” (Jer. 1:9). If he says, “This I have spoken,” then next comes: “Behold, I have set you up as a sign for the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to raze, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10)—to uproot every plant which the heavenly Father did not plant, to raze the foundations of the earth, to plant the field of God, and to build the dwelling place of God. All the foundations of the earth will thus shake and quake and be destroyed.

7. When these things are said, after the one word which alone was spoken to the worthy he rebukes us yet again and he says, “I have not called some of you to be gods and others not. It is not that I wish bishops and elders and deacons to be gods but you from the laity not to be gods, but I said, ‘You are gods and sons of the Most High—not some yes [520] and others no, but all of you.’ [521] Next I said this—and the Scripture cannot be broken—that to whom the Word of God comes (John 10:35), that one is a god and that one has become a son of the Most High, but you die on account of the sins of human beings.”

Therefore, it is said, “You die as men” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). But what kind of death? It does not mean the common death but what we die as those who bring about [our own] death. For as there are some who cause their own bodily death (such as Judas when he hung himself or those who throw themselves down from cliffs or those who take poisons), so there are even those who cause their own death. But there [in the physical realm] death also comes to those who do not cause it. Such [spiritual] death of the soul never happens involuntarily, for if we do not bring about [this] death, [this] death does not come [369]. “For God did not make death nor does he delight in the destruction of living things; for he created so that everything might exist” (Wisdom of Sol. 1:13–14). Even as Judas hung himself, so all sinners work death for themselves.

No one compels you to commit immoral acts in order for you to die, but you die because of immoral acts. No one forces you to turn away in order for you to die, but because you do this and you take other's possessions for yourself and you do not give what you owe, you cause your own death. No none causes you to die but because of anger<sup>3</sup> even sensible anger, [522] you destroy yourself (Prov. 15:1, LXX). Thus he rebukes us as those who have caused their own death through sin and he says, "But you die as human beings" (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). For although you have been called so that you might be gods, you yourselves also die as human beings. If someone has received this teaching and instruction and then again follows the pagan lifestyle, what else has he done but die as a human being?

Would that he had stayed the evils for us at this point, where we [merely] died as men! Our sin was moderate, but now we are sinning worse. He charges something worse as he says, "And you fall as one of the rulers" (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). That ruler was once in heaven and he was once a god (divine). Since he sinned, he has fallen from heaven, as our Savior and Lord clarifies, "I was seeing Satan fall as lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). So then, as he has fallen from heaven, you yourselves are also falling from heaven. Indeed, you are in heaven by believing in Christ and you are in heaven when you acknowledge God. You are in heaven as you receive the Holy Spirit. Thus, after these instructions and wise discipline and you enjoy full citizen rights in heaven, when you fall and sin, you die by imitating the ruler fallen from heaven.

But if even these things take place and "you die as human beings and you fall as one of the rulers," the one who said these things is concerned to invoke God so that he may raise up the fallen, give life to the dying, and not allow them to remain in mortality. Therefore, he prays and says, "Arise, God, judge the earth, because you have an inheritance from among all the nations"

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<sup>3</sup> ὀργη may also mean "impulse."

(Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). He says this on account of Christ's advent. For long ago God was not taking his possession from among the nations but his possession was in Judah alone. But when my Lord, Christ Jesus, made his visit, then he took his possession from among all the nations and we were drawn to the allotment of the saints, we who come to be drawn by God to our Lord Christ Jesus. Thus let us also take God as our possession. And even if we have fallen, let us speak; even if [523] we have died, let us say, "Arise, God, judge the earth, because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations" (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8), through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

#### **4. Origen: *Selecta in Ezechielem* 13.769, 28**

*Origen links the prophetic call of Ezekiel with the divine status of those who receive the Word and contrasts it with the "natural sciences" of the East.*

"And I saw visions of God" (Ezek. 1:1). God paints his invisible and intelligible nature in the visible and perceptible nature so that those bound to perceptions may be trained in this way for the vision of the intelligible.

"And the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel" (Ezek. 1:3). He means the word which was in the beginning, the Word of God. "I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High." The Spirit calls gods those to whom the Word of God came, the divine Word (John 10:35). For this [Word] is deifying.<sup>4</sup>

"In the land of the Chaldeans" (Ezek. 1:3). Chaldean is to be interpreted as "every labor." They are the astrologers who speak of destiny. They are altogether transfixed by perceptible things and labor extensively with them, even deifying them. The Land of the Chaldeans is the

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<sup>4</sup> θεοποιός.

worst place and condition. Indeed, the Chaldeans have a reputation for being arrogant in their impiety.

**5. Origen: *Homily 7 on Psalm 68 (LXX 67).5, 27–49***

*Origen contrasts the current condition of mortal humanity with the future divine immortality to be attained by the faithful after the pattern of Christ.*

Let us attend carefully to the things said by the Blessed Paul about the resurrection, that what has been sown in corruption is not raised in corruption, what has been sown in dishonor is not raised in dishonor but even in glory; and, moreover, what is sown in weakness is raised not in weakness but in power. What does this mean but that what is sown natural<sup>5</sup> is not raised natural but spiritual (1 Cor. 15:42–44)? Why is this surprising that what dies was a human being (since the human being is susceptible to death) and what rises resembling both the natural and the rising spiritual was no longer a human being but a god? In as much as the one rises again, he was a human being; in as much as he was a human being, he dies, for the living creature is mortal. If he dies, he will again be mortal. But if he will not be mortal, he remains immortal—for death has no power over him (Rom. 6:9)—it is clear that, since he is immortal, he is no longer a human being but, upon rising, he is a god.

And why do I say these things about the Savior [as if it only applies to him]? For even you who believe in God and who have received Christ Jesus, these things await you. For you die as a human being but you rise as a god. If you no longer die after rising, you do not fall any longer nor will you be convicted then as you are now. For if you are sinful, it is now said to you, “I said, you are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings and fall as one of the

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<sup>5</sup> ψυχικόν.

leaders” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). For if you remain a god, then it will be said to you, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Moreover, the following will apply to you: For you do not die, nor do you fall, but you stand with the same ever standing God who therefore rose as our Savior, having died as a human being but rising as God.

#### **6. Origen: *Homily 15 on Psalm 77 (LXX 76).5, 12–6, 2***

*No “god” can compare with God, but Origen affirms that God’s people do indeed become gods as they receive the Word and come to reflect the mighty transforming power of Christ’s salvation.*

With whom does he compare God and with whom does he categorize him when he says: “Who is God like our God”? (Ps. 77:13b, LXX 76:14b)<sup>6</sup> If he means to compare God to idols, even the idols among whom God is grouped would be blessed already, even if he conquers them. But to say “Who is God like our God?” is quite different from saying that idols are being categorized with God. Someone of those before us faulted Jethro (and he faulted him rightly) when he said, “Now I know that the Lord is great alongside all the gods,” (Exod. 18:11) because he seemed to say something about God by grouping him with idols, since he did not know any gods other than these. Therefore, if the Scripture asks, “Who is a great god as our God?” (Ps. 77:13b, LXX 76:14b), one must inquire as to what god and what gods the passage means and with whom God is being categorized. “Who is a great God as our God?” (Ps. 77:13b, LXX 76:14:b).

First the Apostle’s words must be noted, namely, the way in which he says somewhere that “although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many gods” (1

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<sup>6</sup> “Who is a great God as our God” (LXX).

Cor. 8:5). But see to it, Catechumen, that you do not stumble because Christians too say that there are many gods and you run back to the idols. Indeed, hear what the Scriptures of God say, “All the gods of the nations are demons” (Ps. 96:5, LXX 95:5). But since God is not niggardly in his benefits, he says, “For I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). For the Scripture says that if someone has received the Word of God, he becomes God (John 10:35). Furthermore, “God stood in the assembly of gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). If you gather as human beings, God is not in the gathering. But if this gathering is a gathering of gods, they are named gods because the Word of God is among them and they do not behave in a human way. In such a way a person is a god and we find here “God stood in the assembly of gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1).

In some way, some of these gods have a glory comparable to the glory of the sun, some have a glory like that of the moon, and some a glory like that of the stars. “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:41–42a). I wrote these things to present how “God stood in the gathering of gods” and “I said, You are gods” in order that I may go from there to “Who is a great God as our God?”

For great is the God Abraham—if one must speak thus with daring—great is the God Isaac, great is the God Jacob (Exod. 3:6).<sup>7</sup> On account of this, these were deified,<sup>8</sup> inasmuch as God

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<sup>7</sup> The author takes advantage of the lack of the copula in the Greek text of Exodus 3:6 and the fact that the names are indeclinable, so that it is unclear whether they are genitive or nominative. Thus the verse, “I am the God OF Abraham, the God OF Isaac, and the God OF Jacob” becomes “I, the God Abraham, the God Isaac, the God Jacob.” As he admits, it is indeed a rather bold reading.

<sup>8</sup> ἐθεοποιήθησαν.

touched his own name, “God,” to the name of each of them, saying, “I God Abraham and God Isaac and God Jacob” (Exod. 3:6). Having said once, “I God Abraham and God Isaac and God Jacob,” he granted to Abraham too to be God, in that a share from the divinity of God came to him.<sup>9</sup> And if you come up to the Savior and you confess him as God—for he is God, since “in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God”—do not hesitate to say that the many righteous are gods. And if the just are going to be equal to the angels (Matt. 22:20), how much more the angels. I do not mean the demons, nor the idols, for I am restrained on account of what is fitting for the Word of God. But our Lord and Savior surpasses all of these, without any comparison. “For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source” (Heb. 2:11, NIV). Indeed, what God is a great as our God?

#### **7. Origen: *Selecta in Psalmos* on Psalm 4: PG 12:1137, 49–1140, 8**

*The terms “god” and “human being” and “beast” do not necessarily represent kinds of beings but relative moral states of praise or blame.*

“He has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27, ESV). One needs to know, in general, that the name “human being” is applied to indicate a fault in contexts where the saints are addressed as “gods.” But when sinners are labelled cattle and beasts, then “human being” is affixed for noble praise. Here’s an example of the first case: “I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most high, but you die as human beings, and you fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). Again, “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” (1 Cor. 3:3, ESV). And for the second case: “You save human beings and cattle, O Lord” (Ps. 36:6, LXX 35:7). The first

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<sup>9</sup> The word for share, μετοχή, is also used in 2 Cor. 6:14.

person we find in present memory with the title of “son of man,” a person set apart in the Scripture with the designation as “divine,” is Daniel and, after him, Ezekiel, both being prophets in the exile. No one before the exile...

#### **8. Origen: *Selecta in Psalmos* on Psalm 5, PG 12:1169, 12–29**

*Origen explains that God’s “destruction” of deceitful humanity has a salutary end after all as he turns them into gods.*

“You have hated all the workers of iniquity. You will destroy all those who lie, etc.” (Ps. 5:5b–6a; LXX 5:6b–7a). Those who stumble in their behavior he called “workers of iniquity.” God hates these. But he said that the heterodox who have fallen from the truth are “those who lie” whom God will destroy. Observe the difference between “you hated” and “you will destroy,” first that “You hated,” is worse than “you will destroy” and second why the verse began with the past tense and then moved into the future.

He says, “You will destroy all those speaking the lie.” He does not say “those who have lied” but “those who are lying.” If the Lord destroys these—and every human being is a liar (Ps. 116:11, LXX 115:2)—God destroys everyone, so that by putting aside their existence as human beings they become gods, since they have become human beings after having once been “gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Therefore, God will destroy the heterodox in the age to come.

#### **9. Origen: *Selecta in Psalmos* on Psalm 136:2 (LXX 135:2), PG 12:1655, 51–1656, 13**

*The “God of gods” is such by essence; the “gods” only by participation in him through the coming of the Word.*

“Confess the God of gods, because his mercy endures forever, etc.” (Ps. 136:2, LXX

135:2). Confession means thanksgiving and praise. It is also what is based on the confession of sins, as we see next.

The God of gods is [the God] of those to whom the Word of God came, as the Scripture says, “I said, you are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6) and “I God Abraham and God Isaac and God Jacob” (Exod. 3:6). Clearly [this is said] with reference to the great love and affection [granted] them. He is the God of the demons with respect to their creation. And the Apostle even says, “If there are many gods and many lords in heaven and on the earth. . .” (1 Cor 8:5). But these gods, named second to the Trinity, are such by participation in divinity. But the Savior is not God by participation but by essence.

#### **10. Origen: *Scholia in Lucam* on Luke 14:12–24, PG 17:364, 31–365, 2**

*In the Parable of the Great Banquet, human beings make excuses so as not to answer God’s call. Origen recognizes that the earthly illustration is God’s own accommodation to those who yet think in earthly terms.*

The whole of the parable (Luke 14:18–20) means this: at all events, if we receive everything in its place, as much as we are human beings, they will not benefit us for knowing the wealth of God’s goodness.

God necessarily is made like a human being in order that he may speak to human beings, who are not capable of being fully managed by God so long as he remains God. He will then cease being like a human being once we have ceased from strife, jealousy, and the remaining evils and from behaving in a human way (1 Cor. 3:3) and we will be worthy to hear from God, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). He has even ceased from being called many other things which a sinful man needs: panther, lion, and bear, as is written in the prophets.

Consequently, I even hear this: “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). To the one who is not worthy to be consumed, he is a light—as John says, our “God is light” (1 John 1:5). Furthermore, he says, “What we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2, ESV). For even if we are worthy to see God now with our mind and heart, we will not see him as he is but as he becomes ours for the sake of our training.<sup>10</sup>

In the restoration of all things,<sup>11</sup> which he spoke through the mouth of his saints, we will not see what he is not as we do now but as it will be fitting then—we will see what he is. Among us human beings he became like a human being; among those who have deified themselves, like God. For God is, as he says, “in the assembly of gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1).

#### **11. Ps.-Marius Victorinus: *De physicis* 15, PL 8:1303–4**

*From the second century (and perhaps earlier among the rabbis), Psalm 82 (LXX 81) was read in reference to the fall of humanity. Here this fourth-century author places the emphasis on God's God's will and work to restore.*

It was fitting then for us to be turned back to that which we had been. But we must ask how this is to take place. That first ungrateful man was damned when, having been called to repentance, he did not obey. Yet he lived for a time afterward under condemnation, . . .

Thus, he beseeches God his Creator to renew him.<sup>12</sup>

He who created [humanity] from nothing also calls him back from death. He is invoked to

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<sup>10</sup> BDAG s.v. οἰκονομίαν, 3.

<sup>11</sup> ἀποκαταστάσις.

<sup>12</sup> The text emendation suggests: “It is befitting for God the Creator to renew him.”

be present to teach how the necessary grace may be preserved lest such a great gift be lost.

Furthermore, God is called upon thus when the human being, perceiving that he himself, once condemned, has now been freed from God's present judgment, is yet far from [1304] that kind of life by which he may come to deity<sup>13</sup> by imitating God. That which before he thought to steal for himself by means of the tree, that very thing he may be able to receive from God. For [it is] even [written], "I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you will die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers" (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). He is the one whom they ask to forgive them as he said. Nor is it attested that he withdrew the deity before on account of envy. And he who laid the charge comes to give the very thing which we lost, once we ask him, by showing himself, by speaking, by giving, and by calling us back.

**12. Eusebius: *Commentaria in Psalmos* on Psalm 56:11 (LXX 55:12), PG 23:497, 52–500, 2**

*In this brief note, Eusebius follows Paul in equating "human being" with at least one sense of the multivalent term "flesh" and relating both to the sinful condition.*

"In God have I hoped. I will not fear. What will a human doing do to me?" (Ps. 56:11, LXX 55:12) For "flesh" and "human being" is one and the same thing, for it has been said, "But you die as human beings" (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7) and "For when there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not flesh and walking in a human way?" (1 Cor. 3:3)

**13. Eusebius of Caesarea: *Commentaria in Psalmos* on Psalm 82, PG 23:981–91**

*Eusebius reads Psalm 82 (LXX 81) as a psalm of salutary rebuke for unjust leaders in particular, but with admonition as well for the Jews of Christ's day and for the Christians of his own.*

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<sup>13</sup> veniat ad dietatem.

“God stood in the assembly of gods, and in their midst distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). The Scripture previous to this condemned the whole Jewish people, especially when God said, “And my people did not hear my voice; and Israel paid no attention to me. And I sent them away in accordance with the practices of their hearts” (Ps. 81:11–12a, LXX 80:12–13a, NETS). And moreover, “If my people had heard me, if Israel had walked by my ways, in no time I would have humbled their enemies” (Ps. 81:13–14, LXX 80:14–15, NETS).

But the Scripture before us now, following those things, condemns the leaders of the people. So, as referring to the ruler and the judges, it says, “How long will you judge unjustly and receive the faces of sinners? Judge for the orphan and the poor, and establish justice for the meek and the day-laborer” (Ps. 82:2–3, LXX 81:2–3). Then he adds, I was exhorting these matters but “They did not know nor did they understand. They walk about in darkness” (Ps. 82:5a–b, LXX 81:5a–b).

He addresses them as gods. He surely does this because of the honor which the people grant them. For one approaches them with the greatest fear and reverence, even as to God himself. Perhaps it is because those who have taken up judging occupy the place of God, by both punishing and disciplining the wrongdoers according to their law. Perhaps it is because they have been honored by God with this name through adoption, as it is said about them, “I have begotten sons [984] and exalted them” (Isa. 1:17). Perhaps it is because they have been made in the image and likeness of God, that is, on account of the intellectual and rational essence in the human being.

Furthermore, progressing in this same psalm before us, the Word says to those who are being accused, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you die like human beings, and fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). Thus interrogating the leaders of

the people—clearly the priests and high priests and the other leaders—God the Word goes through the aforementioned charges. So it has been said, “God stood in the assembly of gods, and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). Aquila has: “God stood in the assembly of the strong; the Lord judges within.” Symmachus has: “God set himself down in the assembly of God, God judges in the midst.”

This judging God is clearly the Word of God, even as he evaluates the so-called synagogue<sup>14</sup> of the gods; he brings charges against those being judged. And since the powerful will be thoroughly examined, he suitably and particularly sets apart the class of the aforementioned “gods” and judges them, since he already went through the charges against the masses of the people in the previous psalm. But here he evaluates, deeming who is worthy of salvation and who is not. He does not judge proudly nor tyrannically nor does he take his seat on high. Rather, accommodating himself to those who are being judged, he stands in their midst, being made like them in human form by which he has assumed humanity. From here, already at the beginning he addresses those about to be judged with chastening words and gives them notice lest they fall into judgment’s retribution; rather they should straighten up and take precautions due to the reproaches being brought against them.

Wherefore it says, “How long do you judge unjustly and receive the faces of sinners? Judge for the poor and the orphan.” The prophetic Spirit similarly cried out through Isaiah too when he said, “Learn to do good; seek justice, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, I shall make them as white as snow” (Isa. 1:17–18a). But this passage provides an anticipatory explanation of these things. Yet those who were honored in the accusation for the “gods” and deemed worthy of

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<sup>14</sup> What has been translated “assembly” to this point could also be rendered “synagogue.”

such instruction “did not know, nor did they understand. They walk about in darkness” (Ps. 82:5, LXX 81:5). These things would refer to the time of our Savior’s first visitation, when coming into the synagogues of the Jewish nation and advancing into the midst of the leaders he filed these accusations against them and he added rebukes. In this way he testified to and gave them forewarning about the judgment coming to overtake them. That is how, then, God was at that time standing in the synagogue of the gods and in their midst he was judging the aforementioned gods. For instead of “evaluates,” Symmachus and Aquila have put down “judges.”<sup>15</sup>

But see how he named those being judged “gods,” and he did not hesitate to call theirs a synagogue of gods to shame those who deny the deity of the Savior. For if he did not hesitate to call those being condemned and accused of wickedness “gods,” [985] how is it not most just to exalt with the reverent honor of God the one who performed so many amazing deeds and who has received from the Father the role of judge? The Savior himself was explicitly presenting this very point to the leaders of the Jews as he confronted them with these words. For they said: “We would not stone you for a good work but for blasphemy, because you, a human being, make yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods?’ If it called them gods to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), are you telling him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (John 10:34–36).

Do not be surprised that the Savior should say, “Is it not written in the law?” For He teaches us to accept every word of God as a kind of royal law, not only what came through Moses, but also what was spoken through the prophets. As a result, it is quite reasonable that what the prophets commanded are said to be God’s laws. And it is the same case for what was

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<sup>15</sup> κρίνων in place of διακρίνει.

said in the Psalms.

The Word of God himself, taking the form of a servant and being found in the fashion of a human being, stood in the synagogue of gods and, having come in the midst of those humans named “gods,” he judged them when he was saying to them: “The word which I have spoken to you, this is what judges you” (cf., John 12:48). It is very appropriate to understand the present passage in this way rather than to imagine that the words refer to the God of the universe, the Father himself, coming to stand between other gods. It is improper to imagine any to be equal to him in honor, or to bring him down in such a way as to posit that he would be present and stand among human beings. But all these things would be fitting for the Christ of God.

Then he says, “How long do you judge unjustly and receive the faces of sinners?” (Ps. 82:2, LXX 81:2). He preaches not only to those among whom he stood but he would also say these things to everyone who has received the authority to judge others. He rightly censures those who dramatically imitate the faces of the wealthy even as they subdue the poor. One should judge with a fair balance, mindful of what the law says, “You shall not consider a person[’s standing] in judgement” (Deut. 1:17). But now we too often become harsh judges over some small matters among the failings of the poor. We become unmoved with regard to the sentences against them. But if the wealthy transgress greatly, then we consider their standing<sup>16</sup> when they join themselves to God’s church. Consequently, this applies to us: “How long do you judge unjustly, and receive the faces of sinners?” When it says, “How long,” it recalls the end of this life. For, he means, “How much time will you have to be this way? Then God’s judgment will finally snatch you up.”

Therefore, he adds, “Judge for the poor and the orphan, and establish justice for the meek

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<sup>16</sup> “standing” as a less literal translation of πρόσωπα.

and the day-laborer. Rescue the worker and save the poor from the sinner's hand" (Ps. 81:3–4). So if by attending to these words we are trained and would even keep these commandments, we profit from the help these words offer. For it will also be said to us, "They did not know nor did they understand. They walk about in darkness" (Ps. 82:4, LXX 81:4). But what did they neither [988] know nor understand? Is it not that they themselves will also appear before the judgement seat of God to render an account about the matters they did not judge justly? Those who do not set God's judgement before their eyes are wandering in darkness, since they have filled the eyes of their souls with the darkness of ignorance. Thus it is fitting for those enlightened by the flame of the Word not to judge, as one recalls what has been said, "Do not judge, lest you be judged" (Matt. 7:1). Or, if it is ever necessary to judge, to do this most justly and to convict sinners, even if it should be necessary to die for the truth. One should persuade them strictly that the consummation and transformation of all things will take place at the universal judgment of God, which will happen through his Christ.

The passage before us presents this next when it adds, "All the foundations of the earth will shake. I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings and you fall as one of the rulers" (Ps. 82:5–7, LXX 81:5–7). God, who came among them yet directs the present words to the aforementioned gods, namely, the leaders and rulers of the people, demonstrating how he imitates the Father's generosity and teaching them that he does not begrudge to share his divinity with them all.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, he publically proclaims that even they are gods and he would call them all sons of the Most High, what [properly] belonged to him alone. But they insulted his grace.

You will grasp how those who received authority to rule from God gained honor from

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<sup>17</sup> πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς τῆς αὐτοῦ θεότητος οὐκ ἐφθόνησε μεταδοῦναι (PG 23:988, 22–23).

those being ruled once you understand how it was said to Moses, “Behold I have set you as a god over Pharaoh and your brother Aaron will be your prophet” (Exod. 7:1). For just as Moses, a man of God who received honor from him, was proclaimed Pharaoh’s god, in the same way too all whom God would honor have received the place of gods over their subordinates. That’s why those being ruled approach them with fear and reverence, not on account of any military guard, not on account of wealth and power, but because of the honor granted them by God. For Moses’s face, too, was glorified, as were [the faces of] the apostles of our Savior as were those of the prophets of God long ago.<sup>18</sup> So it is with all those who are truly servants of God. Although they remain dishonored and impoverished in this life, they have been honored before the devout on account of the grace given them by God.

Therefore, God says, “I have both willed it and said it, you are gods. I have wished you to become like me, the one who stands as God in your midst, and to become sons of the Most High. But you spurned my grace. You die by your human wickedness<sup>19</sup> and your sins. ‘For the soul that sins will die’ (Ezek. 18:4). So, too, ‘you die as human beings and you fall as one of the princes’ (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). For just as the devil was once worthy of honor before God and was one of the ruling angels in heaven, then by his wretched choice he fell from his place as it has been said about him, ‘How have you fallen from heaven, Morning Star, son of the dawn?’ (Isa. 14:12). Some of you yourselves have also become such, [989] not because you are wicked by nature but because you do not make use of good choices. To God’s honor, therefore, he was calling you the (titles) which came from me. But you imitated the ruler in his fall and you yourselves also fell as one of the rulers.”

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<sup>18</sup> The discussion of “faces” returns to the image of verse 2.

<sup>19</sup> ἀνθρωπίναις κακίαις.

“Arise, O God, judge the earth, because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). Through the psalm just before this one, the Word condemned the whole nation of the Jews, and through the one at hand he similarly makes his condemnation of the rulers of the people. Now he asks for reconciliation and he prays for him to become manifest not just for the nation of the Jews but for all nations. That’s why he adds, “Arise, O God, judge the earth, because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). Who is the one who inherits from among all the nations? Do not ask. Investigate the matter and you will find it is none other than the Christ of God. To him the Father has said, “You are my Son. Today I have begotten you. Ask from me and I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession” (Ps. 2:7b–8, NIV). So, arousing the God who stands in the midst of the gods and who rebuked those he addressed, the present verse now thinks it right to add an exhortation to him at the end, saying, “Arise, O God, judge the earth, because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). For those he condemned before, he says, have become wicked judges, walking about in the darkness. But next it is fitting for you [God] to judge justly, for the Father gave judgment to the Son alone. Even now, you yourself, arise. Through your own resurrection you cause the common resurrection of all human beings. And “judge the earth,” that is, all the people inhabiting the world. And it is right for you to judge all human beings, “because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). The present psalm spoke of the synagogue of gods and God standing in the midst and the evaluation of the gods, and explained all the teaching about judgement. This it added at the end: “Arise, O God, judge the earth” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8).

The Holy Spirit has brought all these things to light through the prophet Asaph. We also find that the 50<sup>th</sup> psalm (LXX 49<sup>th</sup>) bears the inscription of Asaph, and like the one before us it

too takes up the theme of judgement. We have concluded that one to be a continuation of this, since it is likewise “of Asaph” and it presents the same theme. In it, it is written, “The God of gods, the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1). Observe how the end [of Psalm 82 (LXX 81)] addresses the matter: “Arise, O God, judge the earth, because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). But the beginning of the 50<sup>th</sup> (LXX 49<sup>th</sup>) reads: “God will come conspicuously, our God—and he will not pass by in silence” (Ps. 50:2b–3a, LXX 49:2b–3a, NETS). The psalm teaching this matter here says what he will do when he comes: “God stood in the assembly of gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). But how he discerns is what Psalm 50 (LXX 49) clarifies as it says, “A fire will burn before him, and all around him is a mighty tempest—very great. [991] He will summon the sky above and the earth, to judge his people discerningly.” (Ps. 50:3b–4, LXX 49:3b–4, NETS). For these reasons we have deemed Psalm 50 (LXX 49) a likely sequel to the one before us. One should note that that psalm just as the psalms here understood to be Asaph’s encompass the rejection<sup>20</sup> of the nation of the Jews and the reasons for it. Psalm 50 (LXX 49), being of this same prophet, addresses the annulment of the Mosaic law by the abrogation of sacrifices. Therefore, he shows in this one too the succession<sup>21</sup> of the attendant ideas. But why Psalm 50 (LXX 49) has been moved from its connection to the present one and set before the confession in Psalm 51 (LXX 50) we have already explained in our observations there.

#### **14. Eusebius: *Commentaria in Psalmos* on Psalm 84:8 (LXX 83:9), PG 23:1012, 45–1013, 11**

*Eusebius depicts the abundance of life which will attend the eschatological manifestation of*

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<sup>20</sup> or loss (ἀποβολή).

<sup>21</sup> ἀκολουθία.

*God's presence—an abundance depicted both in earthly terms and spiritual as God's people themselves are enriched and perfected by the coming of the Word within them.*

“The God of gods will be seen in Zion. Lord God of hosts, listen to my prayer. Give ear, O God of Jakob!” (Ps. 84:8b–9, LXX 83:8b–9, NETS). After having said, “The lawgiver will give blessings” (Ps. 84:6, LXX 83:7, NETS), he next teaches how he will give those blessing to those who are in the valley. How else then will he give them, he says, but by granting that he be seen on the earth? In careful order, the passage prophesies how there will be very many vats of God throughout the world and tabernacles and many buildings and very many altars; and he adds the reason why all these things were about to happen on the earth. He teaches what the reason was when he says, “The God of gods will be seen in Zion.” Clearly he is teaching the appearance of God among human beings<sup>22</sup> and his manifestation. But the Word of God has been named “God of gods,” as “gods” means for us the blessed men who love God,<sup>23</sup> to whom the Word of God came (John 10:35). About them it has also been said, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6) and “God stood in the assembly of gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). Additionally, “God of gods, the Lord, spoke and summoned the earth” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1, NETS). For in these passages too the God of gods is none other than he who alone was announced to be in the beginning with God (John 1:2). And he perfects those others as gods through his benevolence and the participation of his Spirit.<sup>24</sup> He says that those to whom the Word of God came are gods (John 10:35).

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<sup>22</sup> εἰς ἀνθρώπους.

<sup>23</sup> τῶν μακαρίων καὶ θεοφιλῶν ἀνδρῶν.

<sup>24</sup> διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ χορηγίας καὶ μετοχῆς τοῦ αὐτοῦ πνεύματος.

**15. Eusebius: *Commentaria in Psalmos* on Psalm 86:8 (LXX 85:8), PG 23:1033, 14–51**

*Whether compared to angels or prophets or godly people (or even to idols), Christ demonstrates his unique power in bringing about the conversion of the nations.*

For since he prayed many things about himself alone, saying, “hearken to me” (Ps. 86:1, LXX 85:1, NETS), “Preserve my life” (Ps. 86:2, LXX 85:2, NETS), and “save your slave . . . , O my God” (Ps. 86:2, LXX 85:2, NETS) and “Have mercy on me” (Ps. 86:3, LXX 85:3, NETS), and “Gladden the soul of your slave,” (Ps. 86:4, LXX 85:4, NETS), and because he prayed such things concerning himself, the rich and munificent God shows to him that he will not provide the things he is asking in prayer to him alone. Rather, the divine grace will also be spread abroad to all the nations, since they also were about to partake of these things, which David was expecting to receive. For this reason, enlightened by the Holy Spirit and foreseeing what was coming, he was amazed at the munificence of God’s grace and says what was being foretold. Then, on the one hand, someone will maintain that the just and God-loving men<sup>25</sup> among human beings will be called gods, because of the saying, “I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High.” But on the other hand, the divine powers throughout heaven [will not be acknowledged as gods] because the apostle says, “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’— yet for us there is one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:5–6a, ESV). Therefore, since none of the angels nor any of the prophets achieved the calling of the nations [to conversion], I think it likely that the phrase, “There is none like you among gods, O Lord” (Ps. 86:8, LXX 85:8), is said with respect to the person of Christ.

But someone else will say [that this is said] on account of those wrongly and deceptively

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<sup>25</sup> ἄνδρας.

thought to be gods by so many human beings. All the nations everywhere make something up to be God,<sup>26</sup> but only our Lord and Savior is acclaimed God throughout all the world; only he has acquired peoples for himself from all the nations. This is the reason why the divine sayings before us speak prophetically of his Person. Even if many prophets before our Savior had been workers of astounding wonders, it was never written down that anyone had ever done those things which are contained in the Gospels of our Savior and which have been demonstrated by the conversion of all the nations. On account of this it says, “There are no works like yours” (Ps. 86:8b, LXX 85:8b).

**16. Eusebius: *Commentaria in Psalmos* on Psalm 89:6 (LXX 88:7), PG 23:1084, 16–34**

*Eusebius notes that however many creatures may have exalted titles, none can compare with the Only-Begotten Son in his unique relationship with the Father.*

“Who in the clouds shall be deemed equal to the Lord?” (Ps. 89:6a, LXX 88:7a) To reply, no one. For even if there are many saints and myriads of angels and the church of the first born ones, rulers and authorities and thrones and lordships, holy spirits, and divine powers dwelling in the armies throughout heaven, composing the supraheavenly church...who in the ether beyond the firmament, he asks, will be compared to the Lord? Even if there are many sons of God and gods, according to the verses, “God stood in the assembly of the gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1), “The God of gods, the Lord, spoke” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1), and “I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), but who among the sons of God will be compared to the Lord? Although there are myriads of sons, he says that no one will be compared to him nor equated with him, the Elect One who is also the Only-Begotten and Firstborn of all creation, the

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<sup>26</sup> θεοποιεῖσθαι.

Word and Wisdom and Power and Wisdom of God.<sup>27</sup> It also seems to me that these facts were indicated earlier in the psalm where it said, “The heavens will acknowledge your wonders” (Ps. 89:5, LXX 88:6).

**17. Cyril of Jerusalem: *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 11.4, 12 Reischl and Rupp, *Opera***

*Cyril instructs his catechumens on the difference between the full divinity of the Son of God and the adopted status of believers.*

Again you are hearing “Son,” but do not hear it in the wrong way but as of one who is truly Son, naturally, from all time. Do not think of one who has ascended by advancing from slavery to adoption but of an eternally begotten Son with an unfathomable and incomprehensible begetting. And likewise, when you hear that he is “firstborn,” do not think it means the same thing as with reference to human beings. For the firstborn among humans also have siblings. Somewhere it is written, “Israel is my firstborn son.” But Israel, like Rueben, lost his firstborn place. For Rueben climbed into to his father’s marriage bed (Gen. 49:4). But Israel crucified the Father’s Son after casting him out of the vineyard. The Scripture says to others, “You are sons of the Lord your God” (Deut. 45:1), and elsewhere, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High”—“I said,” not “I begat.” When God spoke, they received the adoption which they did not have before. He [the Son] who was not something else [than God] was begotten as something else [than we], but he was begotten as Son [of the Father]<sup>28</sup> from the start, [being beyond all beginning and ages,] the Son of the Father like his Begetter in every way: [eternal from the eternal Father], Life begotten from Life, Light from Light, a True One from a True One, Wisdom

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<sup>27</sup> Wisdom is listed twice in the PG. A review of the manuscripts may show this to be a typo.

<sup>28</sup> “Of the Father” and the following emendations are printed as alternative readings in the Reischl and Rupp critical edition.

from the Wise One, a King from the King, God from God, and Power from Power.

**18. (Ps.-)Athanasius: *Expositio in Psalmum* (50:1, LXX 49:1), PG 27:229, 38–45**

*This author identifies the “gods” as the saints who are called to faith through the incarnate Son and the mission work of the church.*

“God of gods, the Lord, spoke and summoned the earth” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1, NETS). The saints are gods before God.<sup>29</sup> “I gave you to Pharaoh as a god” (Exod. 7:1) and “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). When are they called [such] by God except when he spoke as the incarnate one and “summoned all the earth” (Ps. 50:1b, LXX 49:1b)? What did he say but “Go, make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19) and “It is necessary for this Gospel to be preached to the whole world” (Mark 13:10)?

**19. (Ps.-)Athanasius: *Expositio in Psalmum* (82, LXX 81), PG 27:364, 55–365, 24**

*This brief summary of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) sees the passage fulfilled in the effect of the cross bringing judgement on the Jewish rulers and salvation to the world.*

Psalm 82 (LXX 81) of Asaph. Summary.<sup>30</sup>

He presents the exile of the people in the previous psalm [365] and then here he reveals more clearly the causes for which God exiled them. “God stood in the assembly of the gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). He called the rulers of the Jews gods, since they were called the sons of God. God, therefore, stood in their midst when he effected his saving advent<sup>31</sup> so that he would judge between them, rendering a sentence on the things they had done.

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<sup>29</sup> Or, “in the judgement of God” (παρα θεου).

<sup>30</sup> argumentum; υπόθεσις.

<sup>31</sup> σωτήριοι παρουσίαν.

“How long do you judge unjustly?” Appearing in their midst, he brings the injustice done by them against the people.

“Let all the foundations of the earth be shaken.” He calls the rulers of this age the foundations of the earth. These are the ones who were punished before the Jewish people, as they were expelled from their despotic rule over us through the word spoken to us: “Now the prince of this world has been cast out” (John 12:31). For they were shaken from the position which they once had long ago. Seeing that their leaders were brought to nothing by his cross and then the expulsion of Israel took place after the Gospel was preached to all the nations, he added, “I said, You are gods, . . . but you are dying as human beings and fall as one of the rulers, too” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). But what sort of rulers [does he mean] but those he mentioned a little before through the words about the foundations of the earth being shaken?

**20. Ps.-Athanasius: *Liber de definitionibus*, PG 28:536, 31–36**

*This text grants that “G/god” may refer to God or, in a derivative way, His righteous people.*

The name “God” is said in two ways in the Holy Scripture—by nature and by grace. First, God is “God” by nature and by essence. Next, the righteous are also called gods by grace and according to God’s will. For the Scripture even says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

**21. Ps.-Athanasius: *Quaestiones aliae*, PG 28:773, 41–45**

*This terse bit of catechetical instruction makes the essential affirmation of monotheism while granting that humans may be called gods by grace.*

Question 3: How many Gods are there?

Answer: There is one God of gods and Lord of rulers. Apart from him there is no other. But human beings are also called gods by grace as in the verse, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

**22. Ps.-Athanasius: *Sermo in annuntiationem Deiparae*, PG 28:932, 54–933, 24**

*This text rejects the heretical application of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to Christ’s sonship and confesses him to be a unique union of God and man in one divine Person, the “flesh-bearing God.”*

He is not a God-bearing human being but a flesh-bearing God. For it is not, I repeat, as the heretics understand these things, but as it is said that according to the energy of the Spirit and of the power of the Most High that the fetus was formed in the Virgin, whom they teach to be a God-bearing man from the [933] Virgin. They say he bears this divine power and energy of the Spirit that was active before Pharaoh and all the sons of Israel. Hence, they also take up the words spoken publicly before the ruler in the book of Acts about Christ. Though it was spoken rightly, they understand it wrongly and wickedly when it says, “Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:38). They say that God formed a human being in the Virgin’s womb apart from the act of procreation, by the energy of the Spirit, and anointed him with the power of the Most High, as it has been written, “an oil of gladness beyond his companions” (Ps. 45:7, LXX 44:8). The Scripture called him “Son of the Most High,” just as it is said in the Psalms, when God speaks to many, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Utterly refuting the sense of the heretical teachings and eager for the remedy to be supplied in this present proclamation, we say that the Christ is not a God-bearing human being but a flesh-bearing God. Wherefore, being yet God, he bore the human

being with all the fullness of humanity,<sup>32</sup> perfect God and perfect human, being one according to the one hypostasis and from two and in two with reference to the natures.

**23. Ps.-Athanasius: *Homilia in occursum Domini*, PG 28:977, 8–25**

*Jesus relates to the Father as His God and Lord, but this does not oppose the doctrine of the Trinity so much as demonstrate the unfathomable grace of God toward us.*

“To present him to the Lord as it is written in the law of the Lord” (Luke 2:22–23). What do you say, Man? Is he truly God of God or is there another who is properly the Lord’s Lord? There is, it says, but don’t you fear. For this is not according to nature but according both to grace and the most exalted economy. As God is called Father of those who are not properly his sons—for “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6)—so he is also Father of the Son, properly speaking, by nature, for the Son is of the same substance<sup>33</sup> with the Father. And God is named both according to grace and the economy, too: “For I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God” (John 20:17). For this reason, “the Son is not ashamed to call us brothers. For, I will announce your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you” (cf., Heb. 2:11–12). “As it is written in the law of the Lord” (Luke 2:23)—O, what an economy! O, what an unfathomable economy of Word’s goodness toward us!

**24. Ps.-Athanasius: *Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos*, PG 28:1292, 43–1293, 13**

*How do divine names relate to the divine essence? This text argues for a certain flexibility in the application of titles and descriptors as part of a larger defense of the full deity of the Holy*

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<sup>32</sup> καθ’ ὅλον τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος.

<sup>33</sup> *Homoousios*.

*Spirit.*

“Is it not written that ‘God is a spirit’?” (John 4:24) Then he says, “God is a spirit, not the Spirit is God. For whatever is God is also spirit, but if something is a spirit this is not [necessarily] God.”

But we reply to him: “If you knew the gift of God” (John 4:10) and retained a recollection of the Scriptures, you would not have reasoned in this way. For it is not the case that everything which is “god” is also spirit. For even Moses is called god: “For behold, I have appointed you as the god of Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1). But [he is] also [god] of Aaron his brother: “For you will be as God to him, he says, and Aaron your brother will be as a prophet for you” (Exod. 7:1). Furthermore, the Son says in the Gospels about the saints: “If he called them gods to whom the Word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35, ESV). Furthermore, it is written, “God of gods, the Lord spoke and summoned the earth” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1), and elsewhere, “The God of gods will appear in Zion” (Ps. 84:7, LXX 83:8), and “God stood in the assembly of gods, in the midst he discerns among the gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1), and “You will not malign the gods” (Exod. 22:28, LXX 22:27). Per your wisdom, if anything is a god, this is also spirit. Then, all the aforementioned human beings and gods are also spirits. But if the divine Moses together with each of the aforementioned are not also spirits, then it is not the case that everything which is God is also spirit. Nor is it that everything which is spirit is also divine. For even the demons of you heretics are spirits and are not gods.

**25. Ps.-Athanasius: *Dialogi duo contra Macedonianos*, PG 28:1297, 35–54**

*Further along in this same argument for the deity of the Spirit as the previous passage, this author now points out that the Spirit’s name is not loosely ranked with that of the Father and the Son (in Matt. 28:20) but because he uniquely shares with them the divine nature.*

“If he is not Lord nor God nor worthy of worship, how is [the Holy Spirit] ranked within the Trinity?” And then [the Macedonian] puts forward his own idea: “He is ranked with the name of the Spirit,” he says, “not that of the Father nor of God nor of the Son. Thus the Scripture identifies him. Do not add more than what he has nor take from it.<sup>34</sup> He is indeed satisfied with his own dignity. For even if you wish to grant him more dignity than he has, he does not permit it. Nor can we conclude on the basis of the things for which you glorify him that he meets the definition of one honored before all creation.”

But we reply to him: “Go on and rank all the angels with the Father and Son, since you heard from God himself, ‘I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High’ (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Yet you do not consider the good and Holy Spirit worthy of the same ranking of the name. But for the reasons you have given, you will have to rank human beings with God. But we do not rank [the Holy Spirit] on the basis of the name (for that is nothing exceptional) but because he has the same nature, as we will show later, after showing the error of the foolish chattering in your booklet.

#### **26. Zeno of Verona: *Tractatus* 1.37; CCSL 22:95, 91–119**

*Zeno deciphers the significance of those ascending and descending Jacob’s ladder, not as a reference to angels but to human beings who take (or fall from) the angelic way to glory.*

IV. 11. But when it says, “angels ascending and descending” (Gen. 28:12), some suppose the ascending ones to be angels of light and the descending ones to be angels of darkness. But I observe that this is clearly illogical and unfitting, dearest brothers, because neither do the castaways descend who are known to have never been received into heaven after the fall nor do

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<sup>34</sup> Cavalcanti’s text: μήτε μὴν ἀφέλης πλεῖον οὐ ἔχει. Athanasius (pseudo), *Dialoghi contro i Macedoniani*, trans. Elena Cavalcanti, Corona Patrum (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1983), 61.

those of the light ascend, because they were never on earth but always remained in heaven.

Hence, I think that human beings may rightly be called angels, to whom the Lord speaks by the Holy Spirit: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you will die as human beings” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). We even recall what was said in this way about John the Baptist: “Behold, I am sending my angel before your face, who will prepare your way” (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27). Therefore, it is a prophetic figure of speech<sup>35</sup> that human beings in general—just and unjust—may be called angels.

And we know through examples who the ones who ascend and descend are. Descending ones are those who, renouncing the world, turn back again to the world, about whom the Lord says, “No one looking back (p. 104) and placing his hand on the plough is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62), and again, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32). And the Apostle says it in this way, “How do you turn back again to those things which are weak and worthless elements?” (Gal. 4:9).

Indeed, those who ascend are the righteous, who are lifted into heaven by excellent character through the steps of daily observing divine precepts by the glory of the spiritual journey. These the Apostle Paul exhorts and admonishes as he says, “If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). And thus we are able to understand, brothers, that this is said about the servants and the angels,<sup>36</sup> whom we discovered to have given service to the Lord when he was in their lands, just as he himself said, “Truly, I tell you, you will see the heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51). That is just what happened, as the

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<sup>35</sup> *prophetiae more.*

<sup>36</sup> *de ministris et de angelis.*

Evangelist says, “Then the devil left him and behold angels came and were ministering to him” (Matt. 4:11). Hence, there is no doubt that for the angels of light and for righteous humans there is one (common) way to the pinnacle of the sky.<sup>37</sup>

**27. Hilary of Poitiers: *Tractatus super Psalmos*, Psalm 135:8–10 (LXX 134.8–10); CCSL 61B:689, 20–700, 14**

*Considering the “gods” whom Scripture compares to God, Hilary rejects any reference to idols and settles on God’s people and God’s angels as appropriately associated with God, though he so surpasses them, too, so that even here he remains incomparable.*

8) “Because I recognized how great the Lord is” and “Our God is before all gods” (Ps. 135:5, LXX 134:5). He is not “before” all those gods about whom it says later: “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, works of human hands. They have a mouth and will not speak” (Ps. 135:15-16a, LXX 134:15–16a). For nothing is great just by being favored in comparison to metals and stones and wood. And because those gods do not exist, one must ask which gods he meant, for the church does not acknowledge a plurality of gods. This is the error of the nations that they either imagine or believe in the gods’ sexual acts and conceptions and successions. But according to the Apostle, “For us there is one God from whom all things come about and we in him; and our one Lord Jesus Christ, [699] through whom are all things and we through him” (2 Cor. 8:6). He is one from one and God from God. He does not accept another Unborn in order that there should be two. Nor does he grant that there is one Only-begotten, except that he is God. There are not two Unborn ones; there are not two Only-begottens. Each one is one in that which he is. While the Only-begotten does not have an equal, neither does the Unborn grant

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<sup>37</sup> *Unde dubium non est unum esse iter aerii culminis angelis lucis et hominibus iustis*, p. 104, lines 119–20. Bigelmair renders this: den gleichen Weg haben zu den himmlischen Höhen. Zeno, *Des heiligen Bischofs Zeno von Verona: Traktate (Predigten und Ansprachen)*, ed. Andreas Bigelmair, Bibliothek Der Kirchenväter, Zweite Reihe 10 (München: Kösel & Pustet, 1934).

another like himself, nor is the Only-begotten God existing from any other than the Unborn God.

9) But we must see which “all gods” our God is “before.” I discover that gods are named by the prophet in this way: “God stood in the assembly of the gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). And this indeed seems unclear nor does it sufficiently depict what “gods” he means. But the Lord freed us from error about this declaration when he says in the Gospels: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” and he adds, “If, therefore, he called them gods to whom the words of God came and the Scripture cannot be loosed.” (John 10:34–35). The Word of God cannot be broken: human beings are designated as gods. I find even Moses is designated a god when it is said to him, “I have set you as a god for Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1). But the Apostle too taught that others are called gods when he said, “For even if there are those who are called gods, either in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, but for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and our one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things” (1 Cor. 8:5–6). Indeed we have one God and one Lord, but there are many gods who are named in heaven and on earth. Moreover, if in God’s judgment this name of “gods” is appropriate for human beings, it is even more fitting for angels, archangels, throne and dominions, powers and principalities—those whom the Apostle shows are designated as gods in heaven.

[700] 10) Therefore, these are the ones who are called gods but our God is before all. He who is incomparable surpasses them not by way of comparison, but he is before the others by way of power. The psalm soon shows how he is before the others by saying, “He has done everything which he desired in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in the depths” (Ps. 135:6, LXX 134:6) To do everything which he wants belongs to God alone. For only complete power<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *perfecta virtus.*

suffers no impediment to prevent him from doing what he wants. And so nothing difficult confronts him from whom all things arise. It is the nature of the beings beneath him that they do not accomplish everything which they want. For while the created nature is indebted to another for what it is, it lacks almighty power, because it has another author for that by which it exists. A being that does not arise from itself cannot accomplish everything for it exists by means of a stronger being. But let us consider what it is that the omnipotence of God accomplished “in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in the depths” according to his own will.

**28. Hilary of Poitiers: *Tractatus super Psalmos* on Psalm 135.5–6; CCSL 61B:716, 11–718, 1**

*Hilary applies the same logic as the previous text to the title “God of gods.” Given the context of the phrase in the psalm, with its repeating refrain, “for his mercy endures forever,” he emphasizes God’s kindness in making human beings into gods.*

5) “Praise the God of gods, because his mercy lasts forever” (Ps. 136:2, LXX 135:2). As our Lord’s response to the Sadducees in the Gospels teaches us, “He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Matt. 22:32). He also said, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). It is beneath God to be a god of the corruptible and the dead, but he is rightly the God of those who are being transformed with heavenly glory, who put off the old earthly human being and put on the new one who is in the heavens (cf., Col. 3:9–10). They will be conformed to the body of the glory of God (cf., Phil. 3:21). The cause of these being made gods—though he may require the merit of their faith—nevertheless the greatest cause is “because his mercy is forever” (Ps. 136:2, LXX 135:2). He has no need to be declared the God of gods but it is a matter of his goodness and mercy that he makes gods by sharing the honor of his name on account of the disposition of his goodness and mercy.

6) “Praise the Lord of lords, because his mercy lasts forever” (Ps. 136:3, LXX 135:3). The

Apostle taught that many gods are named, whether in heaven or on earth. So that it might be clear that this not only befits human nature but also spiritual nature, he says, “But even if there are gods who are named in heaven and on earth” (1 Cor. 8:5). By indicating heaven and earth, he demonstrates that this title is suitable for both natures. The same apostle calls God “the Lord of lords” when he says, “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). It would be beneath God to be ruling among the vile and ignoble. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, just as he is God of gods. Indeed which gods he means is not in doubt: “God stood in the assembly of the gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). The Apostle again clearly shows which kings he means when he says, “Already you reign without us and would that you did reign” (1 Cor. 4:8). They are kings in whom sin does not reign, who rule over their own body, who already have dominion over their own subjected and subordinated flesh. These then are kings and their king is God. They are also lords who will not be servants of sin, “because whoever sins is a servant of sin” (John 8:34). It is thus necessary to rule over sin and not to serve it. Moreover, they are lords who subordinate these bodies of sin to their own rule through subduing their own vices and sins. The Apostle knew that he was the lord of his own body when he said, “For I subject my body and I reduce it to servitude” (1 Cor. 9:27). It is necessarily by a lord’s law that one reduces to servitude him who is going to serve. Therefore, God is the Lord of such lords as he calls them through the hope of eternity so that they may become lords and that God may be the Lord for these lords. And this has no other cause except that his mercy lasts forever, granting us through the kindness of his eternal mercy<sup>39</sup> that we, having been made lords, are worthy to be those over whom he is Lord.

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<sup>39</sup> *per aeternae misericordiae suae benignitatem.*

**29. Gregory of Elvira: *Tractatus Origenis*, tract. 1.24–27, CCSL 69:10, 255–11, 289**

*Gregory explores the lemma, “Let us make man in our image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26).*

*His explanation differentiates between the two as between a spiritual nature and a godly disposition. Uniquely, he identifies both the saved and the damned as “gods” inasmuch as both exist forever.*

24) But what does he call this “likeness” except spiritual heavenly life which no foul desire or vice or indulgence or dark blemish corrupt? It is tainted by no insatiable greed which hungers even if one might think it to be full.

25) This “likeness,” then, is not swollen with desire for this world. It is not enflamed with fleshly vice. It does not scream with monstrous cruelty which is itself tormented before it torments anyone else. Rather, this likeness has a pious visage, pity for eyes, a tongue to defend others, and kindness for its will. Therefore, we should attain to this likeness which has such great blessedness and grace that—and this is nearly incredible<sup>40</sup>—one is no longer called a human being but, by a transformation of law and condition, an immortal god. What “god” I mean is not born but made, that is, he is god by a gift,<sup>41</sup> not by nature. He will receive the eternity of heavenly life joined together with the sky and stars.

26) But do not doubt that I said “god” beyond man. For the God of gods himself permits this; he granted this. His lips have prevailed with the idea<sup>42</sup> that you deserve to be called god because he said, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Something that is like something else is such as its exemplar throughout. Nor can something be

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<sup>40</sup> This is a relatively rare passage in which a Church Father notes this teaching takes one aback; many speak it in apparently matter of fact terms.

<sup>41</sup> *beneficio*.

<sup>42</sup> *vincere*.

recognized as alike unless it has particular signs through its personal image. Thus, when he says, “Let us make the human being in our image and likeness” (Gen. 3:19), this *image* of the made and the Maker is in the inner man: invisibility, immortality, mobility. What pertains to the *likeness* is that we ought to live according to the goodness of God in all holiness, righteousness, faith, and piety. Otherwise, the one made from the mud is earthly, corruptible, heavy, transitory, returning to earth from which he was taken. He will return just as the Lord says, “Earth you are and you will go into the earth” (Gen. 3:19). Nevertheless, resurrection has been promised to him. Hence, you ought to observe that it is one thing to be a human being who is from the earth and returns to the earth and there is something else which always lives, whether that be alive to God or in punishment.

**30. Gregory of Elvira: *Tractatus Origenis*, tract. 6.2–4, CCSL 69:43, 12–44, 34**

*Gregory interprets Jacob’s dying words to Reuben spiritually to indicate how the Jewish people represent the beginning of what it means for human beings to be “firstborn sons.”*

“2) For thus he says, “And Jacob will (*sic*) call his sons and he said to them: Come, that I may tell you what will happen to you in the last days. Come and hear, sons of Jacob, hear your father, Israel.” He said, “Reuben, my firstborn, you are my strength and the beginning of my sons, hard in life, hard and bold, you boiled over as water. You will not ignite, for you went up into your father’s room and then you violated the marriage bed which you climbed into.” (Gen. 49:1–4; cf., Gen. 35:22).

3) So in these words, one may see that certain things are done according to the flesh (i.e., literally), but at the same time they were showing an image of mystical meaning which Jacob, aware of what was to come, was saying truly. For as Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob, so also the people of circumcision was a firstborn, as it is written, “Israel, my firstborn” (Exod.

4:22).

4) And so Jacob says to Rueben, “You are my strength and the beginning of my sons” because from this people the foundation of faith and the beginning of the sons of God began to be, as the Lord says in the Gospel: “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). For from them came the patriarchs and the prophets and then Christ, our salvation. So also the blessed Apostle says, “Theirs is the adoption of sons, theirs the promise of the law, theirs the fathers and from them the Christ, who is God, blessed forever” (Rom. 9:4–5). Therefore, he is called firstborn and strength, because from them came the strength of God, that is, Christ. And they are firstborn about whom he says, “I have begotten sons and exalted them” (Isa. 1:2), and again, “You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

### **31. Gregory of Elvira: *Frag. tractatus in Genesim* 3:22, 1–29, CCSL 69**

*Gregory solves the mystery of how the fallen Adam has become more like God than he had been in his innocence. The solution rests in God’s saving action through the incarnate Christ, who becomes human to makes humans into gods.*

If God is one, how does he himself say, “Behold, Adam has become as one of us, knowing good and evil?” (Gen. 3:22) It is a great wonder, dearest brothers, if Adam was not like God although he was still innocent but when he had given in to so great a crime, he became like God. But if that is so, then it was good for everyone that Adam sin so that those whom innocence had not carried to the heavens the guilt of sin could advance. But may it be far from the faithful to foul themselves with such a sacrilegious thought.

For in this way the Scripture recalls that God had spoken to Adam after the sin, “Behold, Adam has become as one of us” (Gen. 3:22). The Father was saying this to his Son, that is, to the Word through whom and by whom he was foreseeing the coming remedy of his salvation. For

Adam was not like God before, since he was recently made from the earth and was not made with an enlivening spirit but with a living soul. He had taken on the image of a portrait,<sup>43</sup> but not the likeness of a way of life.<sup>44</sup>

After his sin, once the time of condemnation had been done, the Savior came to him and received both substances—of God and of the human being—in himself. Then Adam became as God because Christ became as Adam. He gave him both the divine image and the likeness of a divine way of life, as I have said, by his own taking it up. And he granted eternity and immortality through the resurrection of his own body and he set that human being with himself<sup>45</sup> in the heavens from which the Word had come. As a result, the one who had been a human being in the beginning would now be made a god by the assumption of God, as it is written: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). And thus he says, “Behold, Adam has become as one of us, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:22).

For even if you search more exactly, you will find both Adam in Christ and Christ in Adam. And so he says, “Behold, Adam has become as one of us” (Gen. 3:22).

**32. Gregory of Elvira: *De fide orthodoxa contra Arianos*, 158, PL 20:34–35; CCSL 69**

*Gregory defends the full deity of the Son in terms of the “homoousios” of the Nicene Creed. Arising from God’s very substance (and not from non-existence like creation does, including the “gods” of Ps. 82, LXX 81), he is fully God.*

Chapter II, Regarding the refutation of the Arians through the strongest arguments and

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<sup>43</sup> *imaginem vultus*.

<sup>44</sup> *similitudinem conversationis*.

<sup>45</sup> Or: “in his very self” (*in semet ipso*).

clear testimonies of Sacred Scripture. They so suppose God the Son to be from God in such a way that he was made by God and not begotten from God. They take away the term ὁμοούσιον and substitute ὁμοιούσιον.<sup>46</sup> They think that that Wisdom which is God's Son [35]. Thus you see . . . that he who is born is of the same substance [of the Father]. If he is made, he is not truly Son. And if he is not a true Son, neither is he true God. But if he is true God and not from the Father, there are two individuals having their own wills and disparate authorities. But if they are one only in agreement and association, he is not true God by substance, as I have already said.

Thus [in the Arian view] he will be God, as Moses was to Pharaoh (Exod. 7:1), by power and not by birth, and he will have to be believed to be the Son as it was said to the people through Isaiah, "I have begotten and exalted sons" (Isa. 1:2) and elsewhere, "You are gods and all sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). But thus he will be considered to be firstborn in the same way as Israel, too, was called firstborn by God (Exod. 4:22). He would not be considered firstborn of all creation but only a firstborn in the order of events. Consequently, they ascribe a certain series to the things of the world which had to be created.

Next, since they reject the ὁμοούσιον, that is, the term for "of one substance," they employ ὁμοιούσιον, which means "similar to his own Maker." Although the one means "likeness" (similitude), the other is truth. For even the human being was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), yet is not God. Nor is it necessary to believe that the human being exists just because God does.<sup>47</sup> Thus they want to say that even the Son of God is similar so that they say that, wherever he came from, he is similar but not of the same singular holy and blessed

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<sup>46</sup> The Latin preserves the Greek terms, ὁμοούσιον (homoousion) meaning of the same substance and ὁμοιούσιον (homoiousion) meaning of similar substance. The Arian position could easily fit under the latter term.

<sup>47</sup> The logic, explained a bit later, is that "Father and Son" necessitate the existence of each other in a way that "God and man" do not.

substance of the Father. But whoever is not of the substance of the Father is ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, that is, from non-existence, just as Arius taught: Allowing that there is a Father, wherever the Son came from, it is necessary that he has a beginning from nothing and arises in time, for nothing but God alone is without a beginning.

Hence the Son himself said as the very Lord: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). He said this in order to demonstrate the terms of two persons in the majesty of one divinity, as the prophet said from the voice of God: “My heart has belched a good Word; therefore, I speak my works to the king” (Ps. 45:1, LXX 44:2). Therefore, you see that this good Word is the Son of God who we believe is not born from anywhere else than the Father’s breast, even as I already said, from the womb of God’s heart. Accordingly, he calls him king because he is King of kings and the Lord God, before whom all God’s works prostrate themselves, who said, “All that the Father has is mine” (John 14:15).

About this the Evangelist said, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and God was the Word. All things were made through him and without him nothing was made” (John 1:1–3). Therefore, we must believe that what was in the beginning always existed. But he did not arise from elsewhere than from him who has no beginning, that is, from the heart of the Father, because he said, “My heart belched a good Word” (Ps. 45:1, LXX 44:2). For he did not say, “In the beginning, the Word was made,” but “In the beginning was the Word.” Whatever beginning you want to assign to the Word, you will make a mistake because he was in the beginning, as he said.

### **33. Basil: *Homilia in Psalmum 116* (LXX 115), PG 30:108, 48–109, 8**

*Faced with the passage “Every man is a liar” (Ps. 116:11, LXX 115:2), Basil resolves the “liar paradox,” an ancient riddle represented by sentences like “This sentence is false.” After*

*dismissing the issue as a “jester’s twisting of words,” he provides this spiritual solution.*

Those who are yet controlled by human passions are called human beings; on the other hand, the one who has already risen above fleshly passions and has passed over<sup>48</sup> to the condition of angels (cf., Matt. 22:30) by the perfection of the mind. This one clearly is excepted from the rest when the discussion turns to human things. The one without falsehood spoke, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings. You are gods” (Ps. 82:6–7, 6a, LXX 81:6–7, 6a). If this expression fits anyone at all, it fits David. For he was a son of the Most High who has become a friend of God<sup>49</sup> by virtue and he did not die as a human being but was living since he had God in himself.

**34. (Ps.-)Basil: *Adversus Eunomium* 5, PG 29:769, 33–772, 41<sup>50</sup>**

*Using Platonic reasoning, this author argues that the sanctifying and deifying work of the Spirit present sufficient evidence that he is fully God. Other divine attributes also strengthen the case.*

What the power and nature of the Spirit is can become clearer and more manifest when we consider that he surrounds and leads the saints and every rational nature by his own will. He has given himself to the whole multitude of heavenly powers and to the multitude of the righteous.

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<sup>48</sup> μετελθων.

<sup>49</sup> ὄκειωμένος—claimed as his own and familiar.

<sup>50</sup> The passage cited here is an excerpt as from the spurious *Against Eunomius* 5 (PG 29:768, 28–773, 10). In the TLG, it is identical to the dubious work, *De Spiritu* 189, 1–196, 8, also occasionally attributed to Basil (although slight discrepancies do appear, like the appearance of occasional iotas in one text or the other). The literature does not account for these identical passages. Quasten attributes the first passage to Didymus (Quasten, *Patrology* 3:88) and the second he references under studies about Basil (*Patrology* 3:211); Moreschini and Norelli simply cite the first as “Pseudo-Basil” while remark that the second, even with its strong influence from Plotinus, might have been written by him or, more likely, someone from his circle of influence (*Greek and Latin Literature* 2:89 and 105). I have yet to find that any scholars recognize these as essentially the same text.

And every individual person<sup>51</sup> of the righteous—both great and small, both angels and archangels—has been sanctified. [He has given himself] both to the one and to the other of these active bodies, some here and some there and some, too, which hold some middle position. The Spirit does not make them to live divinely by divvying out parts of himself to each, but he empowers all things with his whole divine life.

(772) And he is present everywhere since he is like the God who sends him out and, both according to his being and according to his being omnipresent and like him in every way. Even when Gabriel was sharing the Good News with Mary and [at the same time] somewhere else another of the saints was preaching to someone, when each of the prophets was prophesying [simultaneously at various places], when Paul was preaching in Rome, James in Jerusalem, and Mark in Alexandria, and someone else in another city was being filled with the Spirit, no distance prevented the same grace from being effective in each.

Because of this, each of the saints is god.<sup>52</sup> It has been said to them from God, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). And it is written, “The God of gods has spoken” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1) clearly meaning the God “of the saints.” Again, “The God of gods has appeared in Zion” (Ps. 84:7, LXX 83:8) obviously means the God “of the saints.” As the cause for the gods to be gods, the Spirit must necessarily be divine and from God.<sup>53</sup>

Just as it is necessary for flammability to be the cause for flammable things to be flammable and holiness is necessary as the cause for holy ones to be holy, so also he, the cause

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<sup>51</sup> ὑπόστασις.

<sup>52</sup> Or: is divine. Καὶ θεός ἐστι διὰ τοῦτο ἕκαστος τῶν ἁγίων. The passage parallels the discussions of Colwell’s rule from John 1:1 (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος). This example reminds the translator that although the predicate noun preceding the verb may be translated as a definite, but need not be. Context determines what is appropriate.

<sup>53</sup> ἐκ θεοῦ.

for the gods to be gods, is necessarily God. Thus, since the Spirit is such a good and divine possession and since you already trust in such a one, do not be timid in your requests but seek Christ who is the supplier of the Spirit. “For no one is able to say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). The life which the Spirit imparts to other individuals is not separate from himself but as a present heat is not separate from fire and that which is surrounded with water [is not separate from water] or some other thing like it, so also he has life in himself. And those sharing him live in a way fitting for God,<sup>54</sup> since they possess divine and heavenly life. He embraces in himself everything that is immortal: every mind, every angel, every soul, and he seeks no change, being well, not passing on, having all things with himself.

He seeks no growth [for himself], since he is already most perfect. Therefore, from him comes everything that is perfect, love, joy peace, patience, goodness, wisdom, understanding, counsel, certainty, reverence, knowledge, sanctification, redemption, faith, workings of power, gifts of healing, and whatever else is like these things. Nothing in him isn’t natural to him,<sup>55</sup> but, as the Spirit of God, he has everything eternally.

### **35. (Ps.)Basil: *De virginitate*, PG 30:776B**

*This text encourages those who have placed themselves under a vow of virginity to recognize that their status approaches that of angels but also to stay on guard in the awareness that angels also fell.*

When pleasure came, sin revived. I died and the commandment of love which was for life meant death for me (Rom. 7:9–10). If even the angels fall, those who are equal to angels ought to fear the fall even more. Otherwise, just as they have been like the angels by the discipline of

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<sup>54</sup> θεοπρεπῶς.

<sup>55</sup> Lit.: “He has nothing acquired in him.”

virginity, upon seeing that the daughters of human beings are beautiful (Gen. 6:2), they may go down to them for the pleasures of the flesh and it will be said to them, “I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High, but you” who slide again to the interests of the flesh “die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). Consequently it is far nobler for the virgin to conduct her affairs in a way that is safe for herself and causes no offence for those looking on by always avoiding interaction with others.

### **36. Ambrose: *De Fide* 2.13, 32–38, Fontes Christiani 47:334**

*Ambrose records the irony of heretics denying the deity of Christ when he himself has granted them a divine title.*

Arius and the Photinian will speak as follows: “I deny you are God.” And the Lord will respond: “The fool said in his heart, ‘There is no God’ (Ps. 14:1, LXX 13:1). About whom do you think this is said? About the Jew? The Gentile? The devil? About whomever it is said, Photinian, it is more bearable for the one who remains quiet. But you indeed dared to speak aloud and so you foolishly prove yourself more foolish yet. Thus you deny God,” he says, “when I have said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High? (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6) But do you deny God whose divine works you see around you?”

### **37. Ambrose: *De Fide* 5.1, 42–48, Fontes Christiani 47:602–3**

*Ambrose describes the position of the Arians, who deny the full deity of Christ but will not categorize him with the pagan “gods.” Rather, they place him among human beings who receive their divinity along the lines of Ps. 81:6 (LXX 82:6) and so fall short of understanding Christ as the giver and not another receiver of such a divine status.*

Therefore, they will say how they confess the Son of God, whether by an improper usage

of the title “God” or by supposing an inspiration of divinity to dwell within him.

I do not think they assert he is God in an improper sense, lest they more openly engage in criminal impiety, by granting Christ the false name of God as they do to demons and idols. But if they think that he is called God because he had an inspiration of divinity, just as many holy men<sup>56</sup>—for Scripture “said they were gods to whom the word of God came” (John 10:35)—thus they do not place him above any human beings.<sup>57</sup> Rather, they think him on the same rank as<sup>58</sup> human beings, as they think him to be that which he himself gave to human beings when he spoke to Moses, “I put you as God for Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1) and as it is also said in the psalm, “I said, you are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

**38. (Ps.-)Didymus the Blind: *De Trinitate* 2.5.4, Seiler, *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 52:76**

*Didymus explains that the unique divine status of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is not threatened by the fact that others share in such divine names.*

Because God the Father is one and the true Son is one, we who by his goodness and generosity are according to his image have all been called gods and sons, just as it says, “I said, you are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), although we are not literally this.<sup>59</sup> Thus also, because the Holy Spirit of truth is one of a kind,<sup>60</sup> many “spirits” may be named which are not spirits of God by nature.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *sancti viri.*

<sup>57</sup> *homines.*

<sup>58</sup> *comparandum.*

<sup>59</sup> οὐκ ὄντες τῆ ἀληθείᾳ.

<sup>60</sup> ἐνὸς καὶ μόνου.

<sup>61</sup> τῆ φύσει.

**39. (Ps.-)Didymus the Blind: *De Trinitate* 3, PG 39:821, 26–44**

*A difficult passage in Proverbs, understood to refer to God the Son, speaks of his being created. Didymus applies this to the Son’s human nature even as his eternal begottenness references his divine nature.*

For it says, “The Lord created me” and then adds, “he begets me before all the hills.” (Prov. 8:22–23). This is the same as saying, “He created me from him later as being co-existent [with him]. As according to his will I, without change and without sin, took a share in the nature of human beings, as said just above. But he begat me before all the hills—without suffering and without beginning and ineffably, since divinity is beyond incorporeality. The “before” especially indicates his infinity, but the “but” yet demonstrates this common bond with humanity.<sup>62</sup>

For even if he created [the Son], how did he beget [him]? But if he begot [him], how did he create [him]? Indeed, someone might say that the creation is a child of the one who created it, as we have heard [ourselves called] “sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). However, the Child cannot ever be called the creature of the one who begot [him]. For we have never heard such a thing ever said until today. Consequently, by all accounts, the wisdom of the best traditions is found to have said “the Lord created.” As a result, even according a limited interpretation, what came about is in conformity with humanity.

**40. (Ps.-)Didymus: *De Trinitate* 3.9.16, PG 39:865, 10–868, 7**

*Didymus explains other difficult passages which he must rescue from Arian interpretation. Those which speak of the “only God” do not have reference to the Father alone but to the whole of the Trinity or one or more of the divine Persons individually or together, in contrast with all*

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<sup>62</sup> That is, the passage confesses the two natures of Christ by acknowledging the contrast between the first clause of “creation” and the second clause of begottenness.

*creatures.*

Knowing beyond all others how to fight for a heresy, [the heretics] do not take rightly Paul's saying to Timothy, "To the God of ages, immortal, invisible, the only wise God be honor and glory forever, Amen," (1 Tim. 1:17) nor the phrase, "alone having immortality, dwelling in inapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16) nor what appears in the Gospel, "In order that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent" (John 17:3) nor the explicit prophecy, "I alone stretched out the heaven" (Isa. 44:24). They assert that the terms "only" and the "true God" do not allow a second or a third hypostasis but have reference to the Father alone. But the term "only" also indicates one in as much as Scripture says it for the Trinity, because the Trinity exists in a singular divinity and is said to have "Monarchy."<sup>63</sup> Thus, the "only" of the unity recalls one or two or three immaculate hypostases together or distinct.

But ["only"] is thus said in contrast to those addressed pseudonymously as gods by way of comparison, since it always rejects the demonic multi-rule of those who are told, "You are gods," so that we should no longer be enslaved by wretched, multiform, changeable, heterodox elements. They scatter our thoughts with immorality, as it says, "The invention of idols was the beginning of sexual immorality" (Wisd. of Sol. 14:12). Furthermore, the phrase "one and only" does not rightly suit a creature which is something common to all or to many things together because they all are many instances of the same essence or of the same form, as has been explained in chapter 14 of book 1. But the phrases "alone having immortality" and "to the only wise God, invisible" (1 Tim. 6:16, 1:17) are written because no creature ever has immortality or invisibility or wisdom from itself, but these are received from the Son who created them, who alone exists with the Father and the Spirit, an immortal and invisible essence. So Paul has written

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<sup>63</sup> That is, singular rule.

in 1 Corinthians, “What do you have which you did not receive? And if you have received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” (1 Cor. 4:7) Therefore, these terms are not appropriate for a creature.

**41. (Ps.-)Didymus the Blind: *De Trinitate* 3.24, PG 39:936, 39–940, 12.**

*With the social ascent of Christianity in the fourth century, pagans defended their faith with an appeal to the Scriptures themselves. Didymus clarifies that the “gods” they find in the Scriptures are not the ones they mean.*

Yet you will understand that even the wise Greeks who are beyond all foolishness, who have an opinion to rail against polytheism and who persuade themselves that they alone are most learned, are ignorant of what is most vital of all, for they have no accurate understanding of the blessed Trinity in unity. (Similarly the Scripture says, “When the godless one falls into a pit of evils, he mocks” [Prov. 18:3].) But on account of their hunger for superstition and magic arts, for the sake of affirming polytheism, or rather their own atheism, they wrongly take up what had been said by the Apostle before, “If there are some so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, for there are many gods and many lords” (1 Cor. 8:5). And they make use of the prophetic word which says, “You shall not malign gods” (Exod. 22:28, LXX 22:27) and “the God of gods, the Lord, has spoken” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1).

But they do not see two things: first, that the Apostle wrote ahead of the cited passage, “There is no God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4) and again, “They are so-called gods” (1 Cor. 8:5). That is, they are not so by nature but in name alone. For when [a text] is silent about a conclusion, one must gather the point by understanding the whole as it is given from the parts. For one will write, “Let the reader understand,” on account of the things that are implied in their absence. He calls the saints “gods,” who by grace have been deemed worthy of adoption and of this title.

According to the Apostle, by their virtue their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Regarding them, the inerrant God himself expressly reveals, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). And the Evangelist [records]: “If he called them gods to whom the Word of God came” (John 10:35). Moreover, the Scripture intimates that Moses and Aaron, associates of angels, were glorified with the name of “god” not only in a general way but quite particularly. For God said to Moses, “Behold, I am setting you as god for Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1) and again to Aaron, “You will be as a god for him” (Exod. 4:16),<sup>64</sup> that is, with respect to God’s purpose for him.

On the other hand, perhaps it is not unreasonable to me that he also has honored with that pre-eminent Name those faithful and glorious ministering powers of God, the worshipful creatures, I mean, seraphim and cherubim, powers and authorities together with us. The Creator of all does not begrudge those asking him, nor even those not asking, if they are faithful and loyal. He is mindful of his grace for those who know him, so that he shares all his own goods, even if they are silent. Thus let [our opponents] take up the passage where Jeremy prophecies about those impoverished gods among the Greeks, “Gods, who did not make heaven and earth, let them perish from the earth. The Lord made the heavens by his understanding, He who is the living and true God” (Jer. 51:15). And David sings in the 113<sup>th</sup> Psalm, “The idols of the nations are silver and gold, works of human hands. A mouth they have and will not speak; eyes they have and will not see. Ears they have and will not hear; nostrils they have and will not smell. Hands they have and will not feel; feet they have and will not walk about; they will not articulate in their throats. May those who make them become like them, and all who trust in them!” (Ps.

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<sup>64</sup> The Exodus text relates to Moses being a god for Aaron, but the author takes it to mean that Aaron is a god for Pharaoh.

115:4–8, LXX Ps. 113:12–16, NETS)

**42. (Ps.-)Didymus: *Commentarii in Psalmos on Psalm 31 (LXX 30)*, Gronewald, *Psalmenkommentar*, pt. 3, 150, 27–151, 7**

*“Human beings” in the Scriptures can be a title of praise or blame. It can contrast humans and God, or the righteous and the unrighteous. Didymus explains that terms need to be understood in context. The moral state and the relationship to others defines the title more than any specific understanding about a static “human nature.”*

“You performed [the abundance of your lovingkindness] to those who hope in you in the presence of the sons of human beings” (Ps. 31:19, LXX 30:20). You performed that which was hidden.<sup>65</sup>

There are some sons who are not among the censured human beings. But the human beings and their sons are often censured as when it says, “Sons of human beings, how long will you be hard-hearted?” (Ps. 4:2, LXX 4:3) But when it says, “The Lord looked down from heaven and beheld all the sons of human beings” (Ps. 33:13, LXX 32:13), these sons of human beings are praiseworthy.

And I will explain say something counterintuitive. When they are compared with God, the righteous human beings are also sons of human beings, but when sinners are compared with the righteous, they are the sons of human beings. They are those bad ones about whom Paul writes, “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not . . . behaving only in a human way? (1 Cor. 3:3, ESV). It is also written about them, “But you die as human beings,” since they have fallen away from being gods and sons of the Most High (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). The bad are called “sons of human beings” in contrast with the holy who are called “human beings” or

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<sup>65</sup> Or: You performed the mystery.

even named “gods,” that is, in contrast with the sons who are diligent for the cause of God and whom he looks upon with favor. And again [it is written], “You, Lord, will save human beings and beasts. How you have multiplied your mercy, God; the sons of human beings hope in the shelter of your wings” (Ps. 36:6–7, LXX 35:7–8). “A great human being and an honored man of mercy” (Prov. 20:6)—here the human being “according to the image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26) of God is praised for his greatness. But when someone has fallen from being a son of the Most High and becomes a human being, this “human being” is bad.

**43. Didymus: *Frag. in Psalmos*, Frag 63 on Psalm 9:19 (LXX 9:20), Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare* 1:155, 13–28**

*As the last citation demonstrated how “human being” may indicate different kinds of human beings, so this passage further expands the term to indicate even the devil himself.*

You, Lord, are the one who makes those who are puffed up and insolent fall from their culpable height, since you resist the proud. May they not grow strong but be judged before you, for overflowing spoils will follow them.

One should interpret “Let a human being not grow strong” (Ps. 9:19, LXX 9:20) as being said about the devil, about whom it is said in the parable of the weeds that he is a “hostile human being,”<sup>66</sup> but [one] also [reads] in the prophecy, “This human being who spurred on the earth” (Isa. 14:16, LXX). But since this “human being” was growing strong before the advent of Savior as he was saying, “I will grasp the whole world in my hand as a nest of little birds and I will snatch it as abandoned eggs. There is no one who will escape me or refuse me” (Isa. 10:14) and since the human race has not endured his arrogant words, the psalmist adds this appeal to the Savior, saying, “Arise, O Lord, come down to us so that the human being who has exalted

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<sup>66</sup> ἄνθρωπος ἔχθρος (Matt. 13:28).

himself against us for so long may not grow strong.” The devil is said to be a human being not because he is a rational mortal animal but because he has fallen from divinity as those to whom “I,” God, “said, You are gods and all of you sons of the Most High, but you will die as human beings” (Ps. 82:6–7a, LXX 81:6–7a). For none of those others [i.e., other gods] is only-begotten but is a god with those of the same [created] nature.

**44. Didymus: *Frag. in Psalmos*, Frag. 633a on Ps. 62:9 (LXX 61:10), Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare* 2:39, 1–11**

*Didymus describes the “sons of human beings” as those who are “no longer gods and sons of the Most High,” since they have turned to vanity. The word “together” in the Bible text of Ps. 62:9 (LXX 61:10) makes Didymus consider how people come together to cheat others.*

Commentary on Ps. 92:9 (LXX 61:10, “But the sons of human beings are vain; false are the sons of human beings, to do wrong with balances; they together are from vanity,” NETS).

In addition to these things, it is said, “Why do you love vanity and seek after falsehood?” (Ps. 4:2b, LXX 4:3b), although is it commanded not to have different size weights but a true balance since an unequal weight is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 11:1). One must say whether such things are desired and discussed among those who have contracts and business together. For those who rush ahead into vanity are vain in this same way, always having agreement and zeal for that vanity.

Then one must see that “sons of human beings” is an expression to mean those who are dying like human beings and are no longer gods and sons of the Most High, as indicated where it is written, “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” (1 Cor. 3:3, ESV).

**45. Didymus: *Frag. in Psalmos*, Frag 801 on Ps. 77:14a (LXX 76:15a), Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare* 2:124, 1–15**

*Didymus interprets the verse, “You are the God who does wonders” (Ps. 77:14a, LXX 76:15a) as a direct reference to Christ with his distinct divinity manifest by his unity with the Father.*

With this line the Savior is called God so that he is shown to be different than those to whom it has been said, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Hence, with this line none of those is called god as if he surpasses those of the same nature.<sup>67</sup> Another such passage reads “The only-begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18), because he is the only God according to essence. Even the Father is God according to the same divinity as the only-begotten God. Thus it has been said to the Savior (for he and the Father are one divinity), “God is in you and there is no God but you, for you are God and we knew it not” (Isa. 45:14–15, LXX). For how is it, if God is in him, is there no God except him and he is God, except that we should think that the Father and Son have the same divinity as Father and Son and are one God? And yet both Father and Son are not one [and the same]. For the Father is Father of the Son and the Son is Son of the Father. Therefore, too, with regard to the phrase, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), as the phrase “I and the Father” is consistent with “are one,” the Son does not say, “I and God.” For the Father is other than the Son but he is not another God since<sup>68</sup> the Begotten and the Begetter have the same divinity.

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<sup>67</sup> ὡς ὑπερέχων τῶν ὁμογενῶν.

<sup>68</sup> Funk’s *Greek Grammar* 836.3: τῷ without a preposition but introducing an articular infinitive is rendered causally. Robert W. Funk, *A Beginning-Intermediate Grammar of Hellenistic Greek*, vol. 1, *Sight and Sound, Nominal System, Verbal System*, rev. ed. (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1973), <http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/project/funk-grammar/pre-alpha/lesson-57.html>.

**46. Didymus: *Frag. in Psalmos*, Frag. 836–39 on Psalm 82 (LXX 81), Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare* 2:143–45**

*Didymus provides a spiritual interpretation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) which centers in God’s gracious saving action and its transforming power for human life and relationships.*

Frag. 836 on Psalm 82:1–4 (LXX 81:1–4)

In Hebrew it is customary to say that those men<sup>69</sup> who have been brought forth to judge the people are called gods, as even Moses himself illustrates when he says, “You shall not revile gods and you will not speak wickedly about your people’s rulers” (Exod. 22:28, LXX 22:27). But further on in this same psalm, God said, “I said, you are gods and all sons of the Most High” (these having been deified),<sup>70</sup> since the Word of God has come to them (John 10:35). Clearly in the present passage, “God stood in the assembly of gods,” it means them. Since all are gods in this way, men<sup>71</sup> and angels are gods in the same way. God stands in their midst, not altering his position nor forsaking those who are such. But when they deviate, he withdraws and abandons them. Thus, even Adam after his transgression discerned that God had stood with him before his sin. And in the prophet, it is said, “The Lord God will go in a storm of his anger” (Zech. 9:14, LXX). When God stands in the assembly of the gods, he keeps their divinity by nourishing it or rather growing it through the participation<sup>72</sup> by which they have a share in him. But even in their midst he discerns them in the way mentioned here.

“How long do you judge unjustly and receive the faces of sinners?” (Ps. 82:2, LXX 81:2) If the judges of Israel are gods, the present words are spoken to those who have fallen in various

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<sup>69</sup> ἄνδρας.

<sup>70</sup> The text is reconstructed. The manuscript simply reads: οὗτοι \*\*\*θέντες.

<sup>71</sup> ἄνδρες.

<sup>72</sup> μετοχή.

ways. To “judge unjustly” and to “receive the faces of sinners” is a distortion of a judge. For as some falsify justice for the sake of bribes, so others judge against what is fair by taking persons into account. This reasonably applies to the matter of sinful behaviors. For it would not be wrong to render justice for the rich and for those who otherwise excel in conformity with fairness. Thus it has been said, “You will not pity the poor in judgment” (Exod. 23:3). And it has been said, “You will not consider a person’s status in judgement. You will judge for the great and the small. You will not give deference to a person, because judgment belongs to God” (Deut. 1:17). Indeed, it is necessary for the judge to know that he serves the judgment of God. Thus, it is also well said that “God stands in the assembly of these gods” and “he discerns these in the midst” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1), so that they follow his counsel by knowing that he is among them and in their midst.

The gods are those attaining to divinity, and yet they are changeable. If they change by being heedless, the word upbraids them, “How long,” he says, “do you judge unjustly?” (Ps 82:2, LXX 81:2). Although you have an inner law according to which you may know to choose good and to flee evil, you approach cases in a contrary way by rejecting the good and welcoming the evil and so you judge unjustly. Hence you “receive the faces of sinners,” as you conceal your own faces insofar as you are in the image of God. Judge for the orphan, you who have been entrusted with judgment on behalf the one bereft of a father’s care and the poor who is unwilling to contend for his own rights. But rescue the poor and the needy who are being oppressed, saving them from greedy sinners (cf., Ps. 82:3–4, LXX 81:3–4).

But this is said to those who have been divinized through virtue<sup>73</sup> so that they might rightly judge the one who through instruction for advancement has rejected the bad father [Satan], who is also “rich” in wickedness. Let them vindicate the one who by humility becomes lowly and

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<sup>73</sup> τοῖς κατ’ ἀρετὴν θεοποιηθεῖσι λέγεται.

needy when laboring for religious devotion as they rescue the poor and needy and taking them out of the sinner's hand, that is, from sinful practice.

Frag. 837 on Psalm 82:5 (LXX 81:5)

*They did not know nor did they understand. They walk about in darkness.*

All the foundations of the earth will shake

Divine knowledge, being a wisdom from God, enlightens and brightens whoever has it. For human wisdom brightens a man's face (Eccles. 8:1), while those being called to divine understanding have a command to shine the light of knowledge on themselves. If those who are wise with God are enlightened, those in the opposite condition go about in darkness, always stumbling into evil deeds, since they ignorantly treasure foolishness.

But when those who have brought forth the first fruits of wickedness have been rebuked for their wickedness, they not only became earth because of their physical condition but they wanted to be the foundation of the earth, remaining steady and unmoved in their wrong opinion. But even if they themselves loved to be such, the compassionate<sup>74</sup> Word intercedes that they may be agitated and shaken from that very bad condition that they have and might fall from that terrible state they constructed.

Frag. 838 on Psalm 82:6–7 (LXX 81:6–7)

The good God, who is far from all envy when it comes to sharing his own things said to human beings that even they are gods when they accept his divine Word. This divine Word is God who makes them gods and will make them sons of the Most High, as they participate in him in that he is the only-begotten Son of the Most High. But although God has granted them to be

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<sup>74</sup> φιλόανθρωπος.

gods and sons of the Most High, they themselves ran in the opposite direction so that they became as human beings and died the death which comes upon human beings. These human beings have come about by falling from divinity not because they are mortal and rational animals (for they had this even when they were gods and sons of the Most High) but in as much as they loved mortal and human things. And since they are human beings in such a way, they do not die the common death but the death which follows upon sin, falling in the likeness of the “one of the rulers” who fell. This means the devil. Although he was a ruler, he himself also fell in the heavens. It is said about him, “How the Day Star, the First of Dawn, has fallen from heaven” (Isa. 14:12). In this way Adam did not become as God by sinning but clearly as the one of those who fell from God. For God did not say about him, “Behold, Adam became as we are,” but “As one of us” or “As one from us” (Gen. 3:22) as many of the manuscripts attest.

Frag. 839 on Psalm 82:8 (LXX 81:8)

He spoke another Scripture which reads, “Arise, God, judge the earth because you will destroy among all the nations” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). God will judge all those on the earth or as many as have become earth because they think earthly thoughts. God will judge the earth by destroying among all the nations, not destroying all the nations. As many nations as are superstitious and visiting oracles and the other magic with the spirits of deception which work these things will be destroyed by God so that the nations may become purified of these things by receiving the Word of salvation. By destroying the very arrangement of the nations according to which they differ from one another, God will reveal them to be human beings according to his own image,<sup>75</sup> which rejects the events by which the nations themselves arise.

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<sup>75</sup> κατ' εικόνα ἑαυτοῦ.

**47. Didymus: *Frag. in Psalmos*, Frag. 860 on Psalm 86:8 (LXX 85:8), Mühlberg, *Psalmenkommentare* 2:155–56**

*Didymus interprets the passage, “There is no one like you among the gods, Lord” (Ps. 86:8a, LXX 85:8a). Both the differences in nature and the differences in works express the uniqueness of God over against the “gods” who are becoming like him.*

One must understand that “gods” here is spoken not of idols or demons but of the saints. Indeed, no one among them is completely and perfectly like the Lord. He alone is God in the same way as the Father and each of those others has become “god” through participation<sup>76</sup> by having received the divine Word, according to the verse, “He called them gods to whom the Word of God came” (John 10:35). For even if they have been made in the image and likeness of God, none of them is like the Lord in essence,<sup>77</sup> because they are to be made like him but not be [the same]. For “you will be holy because I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16, Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2), since he himself is holy and they will be so. It is rightly said about those who are becoming: “Who is holy as you, Lord?” For it is not written, “Who will become like you among the gods, Lord?” but “Who is like you?” For we will be like [him] according to what is said, “We will be like him, because we will see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

Therefore, no one of the aforementioned gods is like the Lord, nor is any of them [like him] according to his works. Thus, even in the Gospel he says, “If I did not do these works among them which no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin” (John 15:24). For even if the saints once did the same things which the Savior had in mind, the manner is quite different, for they work by prayer and faith in God and he accomplishes them by his own free authority.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> μετουσία.

<sup>77</sup> κατ’ οὐσίαν.

<sup>78</sup> ἐξουσιαστικῶς.

From this it will be said that no one of the gods is [similar to God] in the Savior's works. But we will hear in the beginning of Psalm 82 (82 LXX), too, how it was said, "Lord God, who will be like you?" (Ps. 82:2, LXX 83:1), because we deem this sense to fit the aforementioned verse as well.

**48. Didymus: *Frag. in Psalmos*, Frag. 896, Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare*, 2:178–79**

*Psalm 89:48 (LXX 88:49) in the LXX reads, "Who is a human being who will live and not see death and will rescue his soul from the hand of Hades?" Didymus begins by exploring the significance of "Who?" questions in the Scriptures and concludes by answering the psalm's question with an affirmation of the deity of those who attain eternal life.*

Since the word "who" can mean many things, let us consider which of the senses is meant by "Who is a human being?" For sometimes it means an inquiry as in "Who will go up to the mountain of the Lord and who will stand in his holy place?" (Ps. 24:3, LXX 23:3) It indicates something rare when it says, "Who is the faithful and wise servant?" (Matt. 24:45) and, "Who is wise and will understand these things? And who is understanding and will know them? (Hosea 14:10). The word refers to the impossible in "Who knew the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (Rom. 11:34) and in the phrase, "Who has gathered the winds in his lap? Who has collected water into his cloak?" (Prov. 30:4) The Word is even marshalled against one to be disparaged as being nothing, as in "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31) and "Behold, the Lord will help me, who will harm me?" (Isa. 50:9). It applies to those of a particular type of person being summoned in comparison with others as a singular individual in contrast with a number of others, as in the phrase, "a certain noble man" (Luke 19:12).<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> In Greek "a certain" and "who?" have the same letters. The question word occurs with an accent.

Next it is possible to take the word “who” as tantamount to “no one.” “For who is the human being who will live and not see death?” (Ps. 89:48a, LXX 88:49a) This is a way of saying, “No one.” Indeed, if the topic is common death, truly there is no one who lived and did not see death, as it is said, “And this death came upon all human beings, for all sinned” (Rom. 5:12), and, “For insofar as it is appointed to human beings to die once” (Heb. 9:27). The “who” is equivalent to “all human beings.” Thus, there is no human being [who lives forever], since each is a mortal<sup>80</sup> and each has become a human being because each has fallen from divinity [τῶ ἀποπεπτωκέναι θεότητος], as it says, “You are dying as human beings” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7), and “Whereas there is among you envying and strife, are you not human beings and walking in a human way?” (1 Cor. 3:3). Thus, it has been asked, “What human being is there who will live?” For such a thing pertains to gods, that is, those called gods by participating in divinity. Indeed, only these will not see death, since they live by taking hold of eternal life. Because of that life, Hades will not be able to reach or snatch them, since God has rescued them from the hand of Hades.

**49. Didymus: *Frag. in Psalmos*, Frag. 1195 on Psalm 135:2–3, Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare*, 2:318**

*In the Psalm 136:2 (LXX 135:2) Didymus finds the call to “give thanks to the God of gods, . . . give thanks to the Lord of lords.” He naturally identifies these “gods” as God’s people, made “gods” by their participation in God through Jesus Christ.*

Of which gods is he God but of those about whom he has spoken? He thus calls them gods to whom the word of God came (John 10:35), as Scripture says, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6,

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<sup>80</sup> θνητὸν ζῶον.

LXX 81:6). [It is truly fitting for such a one to be called god,]<sup>81</sup> since of course those about Abraham are gods in this way. He records him as god when he says, “I am God Abraham and God Isaac and God Jacob (Exod. 3:6). [It is truly fitting for such a one to be called god.] Both the angels and the divine powers may be called gods according to this sense of divinity, by which the Apostle says, “Since there are many gods and many lords in heaven and on earth” (1 Cor. 8:5), because all those called gods after the Trinity are such by participation in divinity. But the Savor is not like this, since he is God by nature. Thus he makes those who participate in him into gods. He is called the only-begotten God, for he alone is true God of true God, being in every respect God of the same substance with the Father because the Father is the Begetter.

In addition to being God of gods he is also Lord of the lords who are in heaven and on earth and who have affiliation<sup>82</sup> with the holy rulers and authorities and dominions.

**50. Didymus: *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten* on Ecclesiastes 2:8, 40, 25–41, 4, PTA 25.194**

*Ecclesiastes depicts the futile quest for meaning in the pleasures of this life. Since the text describes these as “delights of the sons of a human being,” Didymus concedes that they have such allure only for those who are have not become gods as children of God.*

“And I got male singers and female singers and the delights of the sons of a human being, cupbearers, both male and female” (Eccles. 2:8).

“I neglected nothing of those things which bring the enjoyment and gladness of human beings to fulfillment. For as I said about my many ‘plantings’ and ‘shepherds’ and ‘sheep’ and the rest,” he says, “I got other things too for enjoyment and pleasure.” “I got male and female

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<sup>81</sup> Mühlenberg includes some bracketed reconstructions of the text in his edition.

<sup>82</sup> Or: kinship (συγγένειαν).

singers, and I established a choir from the ‘singing’ men and women and even ‘cupbearers,’ both male and female.” These are the “delights of human beings” and “of the sons of a human being,” those who are sons of beings which are not gods.<sup>83</sup> For “he called them gods to whom the Word of God came” (John 10:35). But these others “die as human beings” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7), zealous as they are to have what gives and elevates common human pleasure and enjoyment.

**51. Didymus: *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten on Ecclesiastes 7:2, 199, 9–21, PTA 16.10***

*Ecclesiastes 7:2–3a reads: “It is better to go into the house of mourning than into the house of drink, as this is the end of every human being and the one who lives will give to his heart. Indignation is better than laughter for the heart will be made good in a person’s trouble” (LXX). Didymus links the Christian life of repentance with rejection of earthly comforts and the hardships of seeking salvation. Those who pursue this path experience the godly grief of counting themselves as dead to this world, even as their heart learns to desire better things.*

“I know that this is the end<sup>84</sup> of every human being” (Eccl. 7:2).

The one who is bad in a certain way is called “a human being,” as it is said, “But you die as human beings” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7) and “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not human beings?” (1 Cor. 3:3) Whoever rejects this culpable human life mourns for himself in a blessed way. But whoever lives in pursuit of such conduct and life, seeking whatever is pleasurable for himself, does not seek the salvation which is after these things, which is attained with much hardship. “For through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of heaven” (Acts 14:22) and these (who pursue salvation) have nothing pleasant “being afflicted in every way” (2 Cor. 4:8).

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<sup>83</sup> τῶν μὴ ὄντων θεῶν.

<sup>84</sup> τέλος.

Therefore, the one who has mourned “knows the end of every human being.” In this way he grieves as if his life, having been confiscated, has been terminated. The one who lives, therefore, will not give the good without qualification, but he will give it to “his own” pleasure-seeking “heart.” “Indignation is better than laughter, for in the trouble of a human being it will be made good” (Eccl. 7:3).

**52. Didymus: *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten* on Ecclesiastes 7:20, 219, 24–220, 5, PTA 16.27**

*Didymus provides another example of how the terms “human being” and “god” can function as binary ciphers for sinners and the righteous. Biblical statements of universal human sinfulness do not include those who have been transformed by the salvation worked by Christ.*

“There is no righteous human being on the earth” (Eccl. 7:20).

He did not speak absolutely when he said that there is no righteous human being, but [he said there is none] “on earth.” I am not speaking according to the obvious and literal meaning<sup>85</sup> but according to the ethical instruction tropologically.<sup>86</sup> I mean that that human being is on the earth who “walks according the flesh” (1 Cor. 3:3), according to the verse, “But you die as human beings” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). This person is not only bodily on the earth but also with his heart. “His mind is set on earthly things” (Phil. 3:19); “he descends in his sitting” (Jer. 30:2, LXX). No such person is righteous.

I do not say “human being” without qualification, but I mean those who are not able to be just on earth. A wise person, as someone who walks on earth even though he has his “citizenship in heaven” (Phil. 3:20), is not on the earth. Therefore, nothing hinders the one who has

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<sup>85</sup> κατὰ τὸ πρόχειρον . . . πρὸς ἱστορίαν.

<sup>86</sup> The “tropological” meaning, at this early period, indicates a non-literal interpretation designed for spiritual edification.

righteousness from being named by this (i.e., a righteous person).

**53. Theodore of Mopsuestia: *Fragmenta in epistulam ad Romanos* on Romans 8:19, Staab 138, 29–37**

*Theodore comments on creation's longing to join in the full restoration which is coming to humanity as human beings rise as "gods," having gained adoption as God's children and immortality through resurrection.*

He then says that the creation, in its persistent hoping through us for the restoration coming to us, eagerly awaits this amendment of all things, the expectation of the world to come, because we will all rise to immortal existence. For he identifies the resurrection as "the revelation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19), making immortality altogether like adoption (Rom. 8:23). For this reason, David says, "I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings" (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7) as if no talk of dying pertains to those who are called sons of God.

**54. Ammonius: *Catena in Acta* (catena Andreae), Cramer, *Catena Graecorum partum in N.T.*, 3:409, 3–13**

*Ammonius follows the logic of euhemerism, which accounted for the development of pagan gods from stories based on the lives of noteworthy people. Commenting on the passage in Acts where Paul is bitten by snake but survives to the marvel of the onlookers, he explains that people typically attribute deity to those who do extraordinary things. The citation of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) suggests that God himself has granted his faithful both the title of "gods" and the ability withstand attacks.*

"He, however, shook off the creature into the fire" (Acts 28:4). The faithful are greater than any attack, whether it come from human beings or from beasts. And they are like gods, as the

Scripture even says, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), but you die as human beings on account of your unbelief. Thus the barbarians also thought he was a god once they saw that he had not died but escaped the deadly snare. It is their custom to think everyone who does something marvelous to be divine. In this way they would name the ancients gods, sometimes, as with Hercules of Semele, because one of their contemporaries did something remarkable on account of their strength, or, as with Simon in Samaria, astounding the onlookers through magic.

**55. Filastrius Brixiensis: *Diversarum hereseon*, liber 147, 1–30, CCSL 9**

*Like other Fathers, Filastrius opposes a pagan interpretation of Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27), “You shall not curse the gods,” but unlike others his Bible has a rare variant which makes his task yet more challenging, because he must now explain why these are “foreign” gods.*

There are certain heretics who do not understand what the Scripture means when it says, “You shall not curse foreign gods” (Exod. 22:28, LXX 22:27).<sup>87</sup> And they obey this, since they think that it speaks about the pagan fictions and, thinking this, they suffer no small harm to their salvation. For since Moses said, “You will destroy their temples; you will smash their idols” (Num. 33:52), most blessed Abraham was justified in smashing idols. By night Gideon burned the idols and smashed them and thus deserved to attain from the Lord Christ so much strength that he conquered innumerable enemies with a few men. Consider all the righteous, like blessed Elijah and others. How then does this foolish person think that the passage is referring to the fictions of idols and means that he himself must not curse them, although David says, “Those who worship these things become like them” (Ps. 115:8, LXX 113:16)? And so here when it says

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<sup>87</sup> By including the word “foreign,” Filastrius apparently reflects a rare variant reading of this passage. See A. V. Billen, *The Old Latin Texts of the Heptateuch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927): 46. He is the only Father to do so.

that one should not curse alien gods, it means that the just who nurtured true religion from the beginning of the world, that is, angels and other saints, dedicated to the true faith, must not be cursed.

For all the righteous cursed the idols and broke them and then deserved God's favor, as Moses did coming down from Mt. Sinai. But that Christians are called "gods" as Moses was for Pharaoh and the Egyptians, Scripture calls out, "I said, You are gods" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). In this way they foretell those who worship the holy and revered Trinity with a firm faith. All the righteous are truly blessed and holy and they may be discerned as gods over the unbelievers because the Word of God came to them, as the Lord says (John 10:35), and it is preached through them. They themselves are called the gods of the unbelievers, as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:11), and Moses was for Pharaoh (Exod. 7:1). These must not be cursed but praised and honored and glorified in every way, as David said, "He will glorify those who fear the Lord" (Ps. 15:4, LXX 14:4). And the Lord says, "I will glorify those who glorify me" (1 Sam. 2:30).

Therefore, those who do not grasp the force of the Scriptures from the letters yield to paganism and are again found to be estranged from Christianity. Thus, because the Jews were not trusting in the righteous prophets and other such godly people, the Lord was judging them as strangers and pagans and so they were being told not to curse their own teachers and prophets and the other righteous.

**56. John Chrysostom [sp.]: *Synopsis scripturae sacrae*, PG 56:318, 6–13**

*Genesis 6:1–4 presents the interpreter of the Bible with the problem of identifying the "sons of God" who were enamored with the "daughters of humans." This text represents a typical patristic solution.*

Eve bears Seth. There is the list of those descended from Adam and those from Seth, until

Noah. Men<sup>88</sup> are condemned for inappropriate marriages and other lawless deeds. He then calls “sons of God” those who derive their pedigree from Seth, for it has even been said, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). He calls those women from the line of Cain “daughters of human beings” (Gen. 6:2).

**57. John Chrysostom [sp.]: *In exaltationem verandae crucis*, PG 59:679, 65, 76–680, 10**

*Chrysostom praises the effects of Christ’s work of salvation on the cross by noting its amazing transformational power for humanity.*

For the cross is the salvation of the church; the cross is the boast of those who hope in it; the cross is what rescues us from all the present evils. . . . The cross transformed human nature into the angelic order,<sup>89</sup> as it has demonstrated the unsuitability of every corrupt deed and deems us worthy to dwell in incorruptible life. For he no longer addressed us as human beings but he even called us gods when he said, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). He no longer named us servants but friends and brothers: “I proclaim your name to my brothers” (cf., Ps. 21:23, LXX 22:23; Heb. 2:12). You see how great a transformation the cross effects? To learn more accurately the power of the cross consider the before and after of the cross and you will discover its power. [Chrysostom next describes the promises related to the Christian life: illumination, knowing God, and especially having incorruptible eternal life.]

**58. John Chrysostom [sp.]: *De non iudicando proximo*, PG 60:764, 51–70**

*This text against judging others is naturally drawn to the forensic context of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) and its charge not to judge unjustly. The author sets the passage in the life of the*

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<sup>88</sup> ἄνδρες.

<sup>89</sup> Σταυρὸς τὴν ἀνθρωπεῖαν φύσιν εἰς ἀγγελικὴν μετέβαλε τάξιν.

*incarnate Christ vis-à-vis the Jews even as he places the Christian's spiritual life vis-à-vis demonic forces.*

Beloved, consider also the prophet in the psalm we just sang responsively as he speaks very openly about the coming of our incarnate Lord and the command not to judge unjustly. He says, “God stood in the assembly of the gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). And who might this God be who stands in the synagogue<sup>90</sup> of the gods? Only Christ, who stood in the synagogue of the Jews who were once gods, to whom he replied, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6; John 10:35). To the degree that God was loving as he named them gods, to that degree they were wicked as they died like human beings and fell as one of the rulers (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). But it was not like a ruler of earthly human beings but one of those who tumbled down from the heavenly vault about whom Paul also speaks: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, the authorities, the world rulers of this present darkness, spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). God then stood in the synagogue of the gods; in the midst he discerned among the gods. He distinguishes the gods from those Jews who were once gods.

**59. John Chrysostom [sp.]: *In publicanum et pharisaeum*, PG 62:725, 62–726, 6**

*With rhetorical flourish, Chrysostom offers this panegyric (a formal speech of praise) on servitude to Christ and its blessed rewards. To serve, however, one must first be “found” by Christ.*

O Servitude, through which we escape wicked servitude and find refuge in the freedom of Christ! O Servitude which offers an easy yoke and has and gives eternal life with itself (Matt.

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<sup>90</sup> The word rendered “assembly” in the psalm text is συναγωγῆ, which Chrysostom, with many others, takes as a literal reference to a synagogue.

11:30). O Servitude, which is being called servitude in this world and will bestow an everlasting kingdom in the world to come. Let us hasten to such servitude, Brothers, so that we may enjoy the freedom our souls. When a certain person becomes a good slave, then the Master proclaims him a true son, then the word through the prophet is fulfilled in his case: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Blessed are those who are deemed worthy of this honor! Blessed are those who hasten to be released from corruption! Blessed are those who through this servitude have come to possess this freedom and who cry out for the freedom for which Christ has redeemed us (Gal. 5:1). We stand having the cross of Christ standing firm! Let us cry out to Christ, “Consider us, Good Shepherd, as one of your lost sheep. Seek us in the thoughts of our hearts and, upon finding us wanderers who are about to be snatched up by the enemy, gather us to your flock. Consider us the one drachma and look for us by igniting us with the fire of your divinity.<sup>91</sup> Upon finding us, rejoice together with the saints and angels who dwell together with your immaculate divinity.”

#### **60. Asterius “Ignotus”: Homily 21.26–28, Kinzig 2:376–77**

*The Scriptures present a problem in saying that there are no devout human beings. While this is not true for David’s time, it does become true “in the end” when the godly are made gods.*

(26) And why “has a devout one failed”? (Ps. 12:1b, LXX 11:2b, NETS) Because “truths became scarce” (Ps. 12:1a, LXX 11:2a, NETS) since “each spoke lies to his fellow” (Ps. 12:2a, LXX 11:3a, NETS). If the truth had not become scarce, the devout would not have failed.

(27) The devout one is the reverent one who, like Abel, offers fitting sacrifices to God as is necessary and is not full of reproaches, like Cain. “Those who have observed holy things in

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<sup>91</sup> ἅψας τῷ πυρὶ τῆς σῆς θεότητος.

holiness will be made holy” (Wisd. of Sol. 6:10, NETS), and the opposite is the case for those who treat the holy things profanely. “Woe is me, O soul,” some other prophet was saying, “because the devout has perished from the land” (Mic. 7:1b–2a, NETS). What are you saying, David? “A devout one has failed” and how does the world yet stand? The pillars have fallen and how did the house not collapse? The lamps have been extinguished and how is the darkness yet illuminated? The physicians have died and how have the sick been made well? With you are Samuel and Nathan and Gad and Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun and choirs of priests and prophets—so how has “a devout one failed”?

(28) But the answer comes, “This message is not about my time but about the events in the end. That’s why I wrote the psalm ‘for the end.’”<sup>92</sup> For the answer to the question, “When does a devout one fail?,” is “at the end,” because “truths became scarce among the sons of human beings” (Ps. 12:1b, LXX 11:2b). For truths do not become scarce among the sons of God and “all sons of the Most High,” but “you die as human beings” (Ps. 82:6b–7a, LXX 81:6b–7a), sons who have no faith in them.

### **61. Asterius “Ignotus”: *Homily 30.5–9, Kinzig 2:494–95*<sup>93</sup>**

*Asterius explores the clothing imagery of a bride, a priest, and a soldier as he proclaims the “gracious exchange” between the Son of God and humanity. His starting point here is Ps. 45:9 (LXX 44:10), “The queen stands at your right, dressed and adorned in a garment*

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<sup>92</sup> The reference is to the superscription at the top of the psalm, notations found in Hebrew and translated into Greek, often without their being completely understood, either then or now.

<sup>93</sup> This translation consulted another modern edition of this text, “XXX Homilia in feriam V,” which can be found in: Asterius, *Asterii Sophistae: Commentariorum in Psalmos Quae Supersunt Accedunt Aliquot Homiliae Anonymae*, ed. Marcel Richard, Symbolae Osloenses, Supplemental 16 (Denmark: Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri, 1956), 239–42.

*interwoven with gold.*”

(5) The queen, the church, has put on a better garment than Aaron had. How and in what way? Because Aaron’s robe was made in time and in the course of time fell apart. The church’s robe, however, was woven in a single instant in the baptismal font<sup>94</sup> and consists of the fabric of grace which never grows old nor passes away. For “grace is with those who love the Lord Jesus in incorruptibility” (Eph. 6:24). Amen. Aaron’s robe was made of hyacinth[-colored cloth], fine linen, purple and scarlet yarn (Exod. 28:5 ff). The church’s robe, however, has the heavenly divinity of Christ for its hyacinth; for its fine linen, the flesh taken from the Virgin; for its purple yarn, the suffering (“They put the purple on him” [Mark 15:17]); and for its scarlet, the blood (“This is my blood” [Mark 14:24]). Aaron’s robe had pomegranates (Exod. 28:33)<sup>95</sup> . . . the martyrs who poured out blood for Christ and for its floricolors their blossoming words, the blossoming confessors (ἀνθροῦς ὁμολογητάς), and for its twelve little bells the apostles of Christ, who let the proclamation resound. For “their voices have gone out across the whole world” (Ps. 18:5a).

[In paragraph 6, Asterius explains how the garment of the church is indivisible, not susceptible to age or decay, safe against moths, and seamless, for in rejecting every heresy, it wards off change, corruption, or division. He concludes: “It has been woven from things from above; for the wisdom from above wove it from the teaching from above.”]

(7) “O Wonder! Christ the King took on the form of a slave (cf., Phil. 2:7), and he clothed

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<sup>94</sup> κολυμβήθρα.

<sup>95</sup> Kinzig, following Marcel Richard, adds: made of the hyacinth and purple, with little bells and floricolored, but the Church’s robe has for its pomegranates.

his slaves, the newly enlightened, with purple.<sup>96</sup> O beautiful exchange!<sup>97</sup> He borrowed the body as a slave's cloak and as a deposit he gave the kingly cloak of baptism. The King used the common soldier's body armor<sup>98</sup> [Kinzig has "shield" but rather] in order to remain unnoticed by the usurper and he gave the soldier an armor of pure gold. He took on flesh and gave divinity [σάρκα ἔλαβε καὶ θεότητα ἔδωκεν]: "I said: you are gods" (Ps. 82:6a, LXX 81:6a). He took earth and gave heaven. He took poverty and gave wealth: "He, who was rich, humbled himself for us" (2 Cor. 8:9).

(8) For when he borrowed the robe of the flesh and that which he had made he took and he borrowed what he had given and the Jews tore this robe with nails on the cross and cut it with the spear, he took it off in death and washed it and brought it up. Blood and water came out of the side (John 19:34). He washed it in the water and submerged it in the blood, perfumed it with the myrrh which Nicodemus had brought (John 19:39) and wrapped it in a linen cloth, which Joseph had brought (Mark 15:46 with Matt. 27:59 and Luke 23:53) and deposited it secure in a grave as in a safe. "And his body did not see corruption" (Acts 2:31). And he arose from the grave like a bridegroom from the bridal chamber, wore the renewed and unharmed robe as a groom, carrying the church in himself and ascended to heaven so that those who use the robe might be able to boast for the king, who bears it, took the place at the right hand of the Father. And Paul can say, "And he has raised us up together in Christ and given us together in him a place in heaven" (Eph. 2:6).

(9) So see here the wonderful mystery! Christ and the church have put on each other! O

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<sup>96</sup> Kinzig (note 36) observes that this color was used to clothe the newly baptized and represented royalty. Asterius, *Psalmehomilien*, 498.

<sup>97</sup> συναλλαγῆς.

<sup>98</sup> coat of mail or corslet (θώραξ).

tender affection, O friendship, O love, O gentle disposition! Bride and Bridegroom wear each other. How and in what way? Hear: Christ has born the church above through the body, because he will dress all people. Here below the church has put on Christ through baptism: “For all of you who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Which Christ [has the church put on]? Him whom the prophet now asks as a steward might ask his lord about strangers, “Lord, who will live in your tent as a stranger?”<sup>99</sup>

**62. Paulinus of Nola: *Epistulae*, Ep. 23.44, CSEL 29.198–99**

*Like many western Fathers, Paulinus can take a decidedly forensic approach to interpreting the Bible. Here he distinguishes the guilt Satan from that of humanity with the result that human beings may trust in God’s gracious plan to restore and exalt them through Christ.*

But we admire how he has granted his own names to his servants, those with whom he shares both his father and his rule. Indeed, he has given to those who receive him the power to become the sons of God (John 1:12) and, as much as depends on him, he has said to all human beings: You are gods and all sons of the Most High (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Truly, on account of the guilt of our willful misdeeds, we die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). For it was one of the leaders of the angels, before he became the devil when he was cast out and fell away, to whom it is said, “How has Lucifer fallen who used to rise at early dawn?” (Isa. 14:12)

But we have not been damned as he with an eternal perdition, because he was the author of sin and so he is punished simultaneously for himself and for the human being who is lost through the same sin by which he was lost. The human being, however, did not deserve to be expelled

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<sup>99</sup> The sermons in this collection are incomplete.

from paradise and to be earth in the end, because a gentler divine justice determined that he had sinned through another's thought rather than through his own. It is more blameworthy to deceive than to be deceived and to think of a sin than to do it. And therefore one who assents to deceit is punished for a time and for his correction; the founder of death, however, is destined for eternal torment. For him the punishment of sin will never slack, because it never ceases. And so not an angel, not an emissary—as it is written—but the Lord himself came to raise up the fallen, to loose the shackled, and to save what had been lost. In order to confound as if by a deception that one who deceived us, the only begotten Son of God deemed it fitting, through the mystery of his faithful love, to take up our frail nature so that the devil might be overcome through that which he had deceived. Thus, he who was and is always under God's power and laws might be subjected to a man.

**63: Jerome: *Comm. in Epistolam ad Ephesios 2*, PL 26:510, 35–43**

*What did the prophets of the Old Testament know of Christ? According to Paul, Christ is the revelation of a divine mystery previously unknown to human beings. Jerome explains that the prophets belong in another category.*

And if the patriarchs and prophets understood [what they were foretelling about the coming Christ], one must ask how Paul now says that what was revealed to the Apostles of Christ was not known to previous generations. Perhaps one must then respond that Paul testifies carefully and precisely [when he says] that the mystery was unknown to the “sons of human beings” (Eph. 3:5). He does not say “sons of God” to whom God says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). In this case, those who had received the spirit of adoption—including the patriarchs and prophets—knew the mystery of God.

**64. Jerome: *Commentarioli in Psalmos*, Psalm 81, CCSL 72**

*Jerome provides a brief but dense commentary on Psalm 82 (LXX 81). He both answers the chief questions the passage raises and suggests a proper personal application of the text.*

“God stood in the assembly of the gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). Even though God stands in the midst of angels or saints, whom he now calls “gods,” yet he distinguishes among them. But if he distinguishes among gods, do you consider what he will do about the sinner? Do you always judge iniquity? It is the voice of the God who reproveth. And “you will fall like one of the princes” (Ps. 82:7b, LXX 81:7b). “One of the princes” is either Adam or the devil, about whom the Lord says, “Behold, Adam has become like one of us” (Gen. 3:22).

**65. Augustine: *Adnotationes in Iob* 1.38, 10, CSEL 28/2**

*Augustine comes to God’s question to Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4). The question begins to point to Jesus Christ and to turn the fallen man from looking to himself for salvation.*

[Christ] is God, not as it has been said, “You are gods and sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), but for him it was not robbery to be equal to the Father (Phil. 2:6). And the Son of Man is not like the sons of human beings in whom there is no salvation (Ps. 146:3, LXX 145:3), but He excels beyond His companions (Ps. 95:8, LXX 94:8). For He is not righteous as Job, Paul, and the church are but [He is righteous] justifying as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

**66. Ps.-Augustinus: *Solutiones diversarum quaestionum*, 1, 49–64, CCSL 90**

*The difference between the Son of God and the sons of God is the difference between*

*nature and the grace of adoption, as this passage argues.*

Question: Against those who say that the Son of God is a creature.

Solution 1: ...In the Gospel, the Son says, “He who has not believed is already judged because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18). If Christ is a creature, he has not been born from God but is adopted. But although those prophets before us and all the saints and we ourselves are adopted sons, this does not mean that Christ is not unique, for he deems us his siblings<sup>100</sup> by adoption. Those who say otherwise should explain why the Scripture calls him unique though they themselves want [to understand] him as an adopted son. For you find in Psalm 82 (LXX 81): “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), assuredly by the grace of adoption and not by nature. The Apostle in his epistle to the Romans [writes]: “For you have not received a spirit of slavery again in fear but you have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, by whom we call out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Rom. 8:15). Again [he writes] to the Ephesians: “Who predestined us in the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ in himself” (Eph. 1:5). See, we have been adopted as sons. Thus, how is Christ the “only-begotten,” except that he is by nature the Son of God and not adopted? If, therefore, he has been born of God, he accordingly is not a creature.

**67. Ps.-Augustine: *Liber de divinis scripturis sive Speculum* 128, CSEL 12.675, 6–676, 6**

That the devil had been created an angel by the Lord and was later changed because of his transgression.

In Psalm 82(:6-7, LXX 81:6-7), “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High. But you will die as human beings and fall as one of the princes.”

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<sup>100</sup> *Consortes.*

Again, in Psalm 104(:26 LXX 103:26), “Here is the dragon whom you formed to sport with him.”

Again, in Job (26:13), “But by his command he destroys the faithless dragon.”

Again, in Isaiah the prophet (14:12), “How have you fallen from heaven, Lucifer, you who were rising in the morning?”

Again, in Ezekiel the prophet (cf., 28:12–18, and 28:2), “You are the seal of my likeness and the crown of beauty. You were in God’s garden of delights. I set you with cherubim on the holy mountain of God. You sinned and were injured by the Lord’s mountain. Corrupt, your doctrine is adorned. Because of the multitude of your sins I cast you to the earth. In the sight of kings I gave you over to disgrace on account of the multitude of your sins. And you said, ‘I am God; I inhabited the dwelling place of God.’”

**68. Cyril of Alexandria: *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, Aubert 414, 32–415, 4, SC 231**

*In this explanation of the true and natural Sonship of Second Person of the Trinity, Cyril makes the same argument as the previous passage, but using only John 10 rather than a set of other Bible verses for support.*

That the Only-begotten did not deem himself limited as those who were sons by adoption, but that he knew he had a divine and inexpressible pre-eminence over them all and a dignity of true sonship, you can easily learn from what he said to the Jews about Moses and the holy prophets: “If he called those gods to whom the Word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say, ‘You blaspheme’ to him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’”? (John 10:35–36) If, when the Word of God came to them, he presented them as gods and sons, how should he himself not be Son and God in a better and truer sense, since he is the one through whom they are gods and sons? This title “Son” is not

something added to the Only-begotten, for the name is just as indicative of his being as indeed “Father” is of God the Father himself.

**69. Cyril: *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, Aubert 487, 35–488, 11, SC 237**

*Cyril considers the case of those who deny the full deity of Christ. If their position were true, Christ would be an imposter with his own words making him out to be more than he actually is.*

Otherwise, I think someone could, upon examination, make a most just charge against these strange ideas. For if he knows he is the Son by merely using the name of divinity and does not possess the reality as a product of nature, what was inducing him to cry out aloud, “I am the truth” (John 14:6)? For anything counterfeit is not truth. What through external camouflage does not appear to be what it is by nature forces its way in and dares to enter the glory of the truth, but it could not truly have it in this case. Reasoning’s testings expose it as unseemly. And why did one who is supposedly not God by nature think it necessary not to count himself among those who are gods by adoption? But he separated himself from the throng of the saints and he was ascending to his own place as if none of the others could gain access there, as he said, “If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’” (John 10:35–36) He says, if these have been called gods because they have welcomed and received<sup>101</sup> the Word of God within their soul, how can he, through whom they are gods, not be God himself? “For the Word was God” (John 1:1), as John declared. But the “was” entails no recent glory for him but one older than all time. . .

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<sup>101</sup> εἰσοικισάμενοι καὶ εἰσδεδεγμένοι.

**70. Cyril: *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, Aubert 498, 19–499, 7, SC 237**

*Using the convention of a “Socratic” conversation, Cyril correlates the natural sonship of the Son of God with his sharing the Father’s nature.*

B: Therefore, nothing stands in the way to believe and to maintain that, because the Son has arisen from the essence of God the Father himself, he cannot be conceived as different from him as far as pertains to the identity of his nature.

A: Very good, my Friend. It also appeared to be right to the blessed Apostle Paul to teach in this way. He says, “If God is for us, who is against us? He who spared not his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him grant us all things?” (Rom. 8:31)

If the Son is truly the proper Son of God the Father, could [the Father] go out to a nature alien to him? Could an acceptable reason be conceived for him to be separated out to be something else and for his very Son to be shown to belong to something else than to him whose own it was thought and said to be?

B: I do not think so.

A: But why? Do we not say that there are thousands of those whom God calls to sonship?

B: Yes, indeed. For it is written, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

A: Then are there one or two from this countless crowd whom someone might dare to say that they are the proper sons of God the Father and yet not incur a penalty which someone could threaten as coming to those who wish to pervert the beauty of the truth?

B: I myself would agree. You are speaking the truth.

A: But if I want to learn, in contrast to these many thousands called gods and sons, to whom alone belongs the proper and true sense of the terms? What would you yourself say?

B: I would say that those brought to sonship by the generosity from above<sup>102</sup> enjoy this designation as a boon and a gift.<sup>103</sup> But he is not like that but truly the very one [Son] of God the Father, because, with him, he is unique having a nature surpassing them all.

A. Could what is God's own by nature be not divine? Rather, what is not divine is a creature, isn't it?

B. This is indisputable.

**71. Cyril, *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, Aubert 520, 1–44, SC 237**

*Continuing his Socratic instruction about the truly divine nature of the Son of God, Cyril teaches a distinction between the application of names, whether exalted or lowly, and the reality of the nature of a thing.*

A. . . . in this way, he is both an Only-begotten and a First-born, just as he is a true Son and not a creature.

B. But it is posited, they say, that the name “son” also accords with creatures. “For I said,” they say, “You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

A. Then tell me why would it wrong the one who is God and Son truly and by nature, having been manifested from the very essence of God the Father, either with respect to his glory or with respect to our understanding of his being, if we ourselves also have been called sons and gods by adoption, although we are by nature from the earth?

B. What do you mean?

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<sup>102</sup> φιλοτιμίας τῆς ἄνωθεν.

<sup>103</sup> εὐρημά τε καὶ δῶρον.

A. That it would appear, my good man, that the force of a term in an analogical sense<sup>104</sup> could not bring down what possesses the highest and the most exalted nature to the rank of something lower nor could that which is small and inferior in such glory ascend to outsized honor beyond its nature<sup>105</sup> by mere hyperbolic expressions.<sup>106</sup> Do you know what I am saying and understand me well?

B. Not particularly.

A. Although for us there is one God by nature who exists and is worshipped, we have been designated as gods ourselves by grace and moreover we have been enriched with the glory of sonship. For did you not just tell us this?

B. Yes.

A. What, then, Friend? Since we have been called gods and sons, does it then come about that we ourselves exist by nature as gods and in truth as sons of the one who transcends and surpasses? Do we have that glorious honor of his not as something accidental, or do we believe that we are considered the fruit of the most exalted nature?

B. By no means. For how could what has a nature of becoming be God by nature?

A. Well said, my friend. For each remains in his own nature,<sup>107</sup> neither being raised up by the sublimity of an expression nor demoted and sunken down if something of a humbler nature be spoken about him. Therefore, come now, let us say that if the term “firstborn” should come to be applied to the Son as what he became for our sake when he became manifest for us, that could not degrade his existence as God and Son by nature and in truth. For just being designated as

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<sup>104</sup> ἡ τῶν λέξεων ὡς ἐν καταχρήσει δύναμις.

<sup>105</sup> ὑπὲρ φύσιν.

<sup>106</sup> ψιλαῖς ῥηματίων ὑπερβολαῖς.

<sup>107</sup> μένει γὰρ ἕκαστον ἐν ἰδίᾳ φύσει.

gods does not bring us up to an existence beyond nature, so, I think, his enrollment among creatures for humanity's sake in no wise can demote him to anything short of his nature.

**72. Cyril: *De sancta Trinitate dialogi*, Aubert 589, 1–11, SC 237**

*Cyril makes the same argument for the divinity of the Son, demonstrating again his own preference for citing John 10 for this point.*

And the wise John the Baptist says that the Spirit was “seen descending on him as a dove” (John 1:32). And in another place, the Son himself was saying as he was addressing the Jews, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, You are gods’? If he called those to whom the word of God came gods—and the Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and send into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (John 10:34–36). And one could easily pile up many thousands of such passages through which one may learn how the Son has been sanctified by the Father.

**73. Cyril: *Expositio in Psalmos*, PG 69:1204, 48–1205, 25**

*Commenting on Ps. 82:1 (LXX 81:1), Cyril distinguishes Christ, who is true God, from the “gods” who are such by grace. Following Paul’s citation of Exod. 22:28 (LXX 22:27) in Acts 23, he specifies the gods as the priests of Israel. An addendum in the catena tradition further expands the title to include Christians who participate in Christ’s divinity.*

“God stood in the assembly of gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1).

Without hesitation it calls the Savior God among them, true God, not spurious, not pseudonymous, but also not by having a share in grace from another and attaining that name in that way. But he was what he was truly and by nature, which he is also called.

It again calls them gods who are not really this, but they are so named by grace. The ever-

wise Apostle Paul mentions them when he writes, “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:5–6, ESV).

Indeed, then, some are called “gods” by grace. It has even been said to us through the voice of the psalmist, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Therefore, the only-begotten Word of God, being true God, stood in the assembly of gods. What kind of gods were they then? As for their dignity, they are those whom God has honored by a call into the priesthood. For Paul addresses them this way too when he says, “You will not malign gods nor will you speak wickedly of a ruler of your people” (cf., Acts 23:5).

[“I said, You are gods and sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).<sup>108</sup>

Since we have become his sons because we have received the true Son by nature into our minds through the Holy Spirit, therefore, we have also been honored by this address and we have been named gods, although we are not such by nature, but on account of the honor and glory [he gives us]. Even if we are called gods, there is only one true God by nature, who is over all. We are “gods” by participation,<sup>109</sup> as said above.]

#### **74. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:45, 1–38**

*Opposing the Arians who maintained the Son was created and that “there was a time when he was not,” Cyril here argues that the Son is co-eternal with the Father. He begins, however, with a careful consideration of how the ramifications of his opponents’ position, given the*

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<sup>108</sup> The Latin text in PG labels this section “ex corderio,” that is, from Bathasar Cordier (1592–650) and published from the catenae fragments he consulted. Cf., PG 69:698.

<sup>109</sup> μέθεξις.

*possibilities of the Son's mere "participation" in the Father.*

O you who fight against God, if, according to your opinion, the Son arose from non-being and did not exist before he was begotten to become one who [merely] partakes of God, it is clear that he himself was called "god" and "son" and "wisdom" just as the other rational creatures. For this comes to rational creatures to whom the beauty of divinity is not truly predicated according to nature but the grace of the Giver effects this. So it is when it is said, "I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). For in that we have been made children of God, we have also been deified by him.<sup>110</sup> If, then we are called sons of God by sharing in God by grace, in whom would we propose that the Word shares so that he may become Son or God? As for us, this takes place by the Holy Spirit. It would be foolish to think this is also true for the Word, for he himself says about the Holy Spirit, "He receives from what is mine" (John 16:15). In whom then does he partake [in order to gain a share of divinity if it is not his by nature]? The only one left to say is the Father.

What then is the manner of this participation? Or what is that which passes out of the Father<sup>111</sup> and comes to be in the Word so that it may be shared? Come on and tell me how it's like heat that moves from fire into a body or how a certain flower emits a scent. But this is rather like how he comes into our spirit,<sup>112</sup> about which the Scripture says, "He comes out from the Father" (John 15:26). But what then is that which comes out from the Father and comes to be in the Word? Is it something from the essence of the Father, or something outside him and this is what is received? If it is something already outside, then the Son is not a partaker of the Father but is sanctified by partaking in something else, which by itself is already an impious thought. If

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<sup>110</sup> σχέσει γὰρ τῇ πρὸς θεὸν υἰοποιηθέντες παρ' αὐτοῦ θεοποιούμεθα.

<sup>111</sup> τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξῆδν.

<sup>112</sup> With an emendation of the text, one might render this: how the Spirit comes into us.

you allow that what is provided to the Word for participation with the Father comes from the Father's essence—whether you posit that some part or section or suffering is able to take place with respect to the nature of God or you say that these things are not subject to suffering or division—you vainly misconstrue the birth of Son by introducing division or suffering into it. If God bears the Son without division, he begets him without suffering from himself and nothing hinders us from confessing that the one born is the living Word of the Father.

But the one proceeding from the eternal Father will be altogether eternal as well. . .

**75. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:124, 48–125, 27**

*The Arians point to the passage which indicates that the Father is the “God” of the Son. After articulating their position, Cyril interprets this in terms of the incarnate position of the Son, rejecting any equation of him with mere creatures.*

On the topic of the Son being of the same substance with the Father, the Scriptural text stands: “I am going to my Father and you Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17). The argument as presented by the Eunomian camp: They ask, how can the Son be of the same substance with the Father when he has him as his God? For his own words make clear, “I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17). And again, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). If he is his God, how are they of the same substance? For the things which belong to the same nature could not be gods by nature for one another. Nor is it as if the soul would become a God to another soul nor an angel for another angel.

The solution:

The one fighting against Christ again sees him as a creature, since he is not considering the Son to be the Lord, and instead of [thinking of him as] the Master a slave and instead of God a

servant. For if he imagines the Son's God by nature to be the Father and he does not see his saving work among others, the Son will not be of the same substance as the Father nor Master nor God. He insists on this beautifully. Let him then blatantly cast away from the Son both divinity and lordship. Let him rank him with creatures so that once that camp's blasphemy has become clear to all, they may compel everyone to say [to them], "You are deceived because you do not know the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29). "One must explore the secret power of the Word, no longer as God but as a temple of God," they heedlessly blaspheme, while they introduce the Son as if he were like any of the saints, about whom it says, "I will dwell among them and I will go about" (2 Cor. 6:16). Thus, according to their madness, he will be one and the same as those who are addressed as sons and gods by grace, to whom he has said, "I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). But Christ clearly teaches in the Gospel that he is altogether different than these and he is distinct by the excellence of his nature when he says, "You are from below; I am from above" (John 8:23). By "below" he means the nature which is governed and subjugated; by "above" he means the divinity which rules and transcends all things.<sup>113</sup> Truly, although Christ says he is from above, his opponent says he is from below as he openly degrades the essence of the Son.

**76. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:189, 13–38**

*Cyril deals with another Arian objection which argues that the orthodox position opens the way to saying that human beings can become gods the way the Son is God. Cyril again points to the distinction between nature and grace.*

The heretics say, if the Son is also called an image of the Father and works in unity with

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<sup>113</sup> τὴν βασιλεύουσαν καὶ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐποχομένην θεότητα.

him according to nature and glorified by such titles, what will stop us, human beings, from being of like substance according to his essence, since we too have been called sons and have been made according to the image of God?

A solution to this:

Dearest friend, in our case it is a matter of grace, but for the Word of God he is this by nature. About this it is says, “Who is like you among the gods, Lord?” (Exod. 15:11). It is not as if this dignity he has is brought to him from outside of himself; it is naturally his.<sup>114</sup> About us, it says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). Consequently, if we do not make every effort to put aside what is bad, we can easily fall away from the things we have received. By grace we have received the gift to be called sons and gods, titles which naturally belong to the Son. Yes, we are called the image of God since we have received his Word as the true image and he has come to dwell among us, or rather, he has become incarnate in these last days for our salvation. There is a great and immeasurable difference, then, between us who are have been called sons by grace and he who is such by nature and truly. And so your proposal or “useful thought” has been shown to be foolishness instead.

**77. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:217, 30–51**

*One of the key passages in the Christological debates was Phil. 2:5–11, which the Arians read as the Son’s achievement of personal exaltation as a reward for his obedience and the orthodox read as the praise due to the Son for his work of salvation. Cyril observes that this would render the previous deification of Old Testament saints through the Word impossible.*

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<sup>114</sup> φυσικὸν.

According to your view, if he was exalted when he humbled himself and because of this the name above every name was granted to him, that is, he was called God and furthermore was anointed and named Son, one has to say that the Word of God was not any of these things before his humiliation. For one would not accept what he already has even if he doesn't take it. And if before the time of his humiliation we find God saying to certain people, "I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), then it seems that many had become sons and gods before him. Then how can it be true that all things were made by him (John 1:3)? How is he "before all things" if he has many before him (Col. 1:17)? And how is he the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15)? And if those who are sons by grace attain their place in imitation of the one who is the Son by nature, how do they precede the Son by nature? And if through him we are adopted by partaking in the Son, how will they who partake precede him who is partaken of and through whom they come about? And how is it that the one who is first is not greater than he who comes along many generations later? Their position is very perplexing. Consequently, we must hold that he is the Son without alteration or change, being Son not by grace nor because he progresses to a similarity to the Father, but he is the Son essentially and naturally.<sup>115</sup>

**78. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:317, 46–320, 14**

*Cyril responds here to the Eunomian objection that if the Son speaks only what he had heard from the Father (John 12:49), he must not have known what to speak until the Father spoke and therefore cannot be infinite like the Father. That would make the Word himself a recipient of the Word and no different from the prophets.*

[If you are correct] then the Word of God who speaks by the prophets will not differ from

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<sup>115</sup> οὐσιωδῶς τε καὶ φυσικῶς.

the prophets in any way even though he is foretelling the future to them. For he would not have the knowledge of these things from himself. Foreknowledge of the future belongs to God alone. And what shall we do when the Lord clearly distinguishes himself from being their equal? He says so: “If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (John 10:35–36, ESV). For if he had an equality of nature with the prophets, he would not be making a comparison of the lesser [to the greater] between them and himself by taking their case as an example. For in saying “If he called them gods to whom the word of God came,” he is clearly showing that the Word of God has not come to him as it did to them, but he himself is the Word of the Father who was spoken to the prophets. How then will such a one, set apart from the prophets and residing somehow above them, not have anything more than they per your audacious assertion, Blasphemer?

**79. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:325, 3–29**

*Cyril deals with another objection from those who deny the deity of the Son. They argue that his names do not reveal his essence. Cyril counters that the names of Christ are spoken of him most truly but only loosely when applied to others.*

Objection from one of the Eunomians: He says, “‘Word’ as a name does not indicate sonship on its own nor can his essence be revealed through the title ‘Son.’ For he is called by many other names which are neither consequential nor particular.”

Solution: [If what you say is true,] then the name “God” is not able to express God’s essence, for it also refers to those who are not gods by nature, as in “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Likewise, as the words “righteous” and “good” and “holy” are applied to human beings (for there are many such by participation in the One who is truly and actually good

and righteous), what stops us from saying that each of these words is not properly applied to God? If we have predications in common with him while the reality of these terms is accurately depicted only with regard to his nature, there is nothing amiss when the Word is called the Son as well. Furthermore, this appellation is indicative of his essence, even as there are many other words which may be loosely<sup>116</sup> applied to others in imitation of him who is truly called this. For this reason, the Son says about himself, “I am the truth” (John 14:6). Therefore, what anyone could say fittingly and appropriately about his divine begetting, he will say properly about him, but in respect to others it will not be said properly but loosely instead.

**80. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:540, 8–29**

*Cyril continues his responses to the Arian objections. Here he highlights how the language of Christ about his Father presumed a unique and natural relationship with him.*

Another solution: [Christ said,] “Take these things from here and do not make the Father’s house a house of business” (John 2:16). If the Son is a creature, clearly he is only able to be called God by grace and the title of sonship is his by adoption just as it is also granted to other rational creatures. In their case, their nature obviously is unable to secure this dignity, but that is effected by the grace of the one who says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Then, if he is not the Son essentially, then he is a brother of those who have been called to the sonship of God. Someone could then ask, how is it that he has nothing more than we with respect to the dignity of sonship and yet he makes an exclusive claim on the common Father of all, as when he says, “Do not make my Father’s house . . . ,” for the one who is just and good ought to have said to the merchants, “Do not make your Father’s house a house

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<sup>116</sup> καταχρηστικῶς.

of business.” But he clearly does not say this, but claims for himself alone the great authority to name him Father. He knew, then, that he himself was properly called Son by nature, in whose imitation we have been called to this sonship by God. And how could the one who is naturally the Son in this way be a creature?

**81. Cyril: *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate*, PG 75:556, 41–52**

*Yet arguing for the natural deity of Christ, Cyril cites John 10 to contrast Jesus’ natural Sonship with the adopted sonship of creatures.*

“Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your Law, “I said, You are gods”? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God?”’” (John 10:34–36).

You see how he clearly differentiates himself from those who are gods by adoption, since he himself is clearly by nature what he grants them with a portion of grace?<sup>117</sup> How then can one think that he who is God in his essence<sup>118</sup> does not altogether escape being a creature, since we must understand the divine and incomprehensible nature to be above what is created?

**82. Cyril: *Contra Julianum* 8.4, 23–8.5, 15, GCS New Series 21:537<sup>119</sup>**

*The previous passages presented some of Cyril’s arguments against those who understood the divine Word to be a lesser deity. In opposing the Emperor Julian, Cyril argues against a resurgent paganism which even appealed to the Christian Scriptures to legitimize polytheism.*

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<sup>117</sup> ἐκείνοις ἐν χάριτος μέρει προστίθεται.

<sup>118</sup> οὐσιωδῶς.

<sup>119</sup> PG 9:889C–D.

If God alone is and is said to be God by nature, then there will be no one who is truly God alongside him. Against this, he [Julian] twists Moses words even though he explicitly says, “Here, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord, is one” (Deut. 6:4). He was not venturing to think or to say that the one God over all is “exceptional” along with others, but he was believing that he alone is exalted on high with incomparable perfections of the intellect and beyond all intellect and self-sustaining and uncreated.<sup>120</sup> How and why is this confusing then? After all, he is the one and only Lord God and if others might be called gods and lords, they have been honored with the bare title<sup>121</sup> since they are other than he by nature, a nature that is subordinate to his and once did not exist, having been brought into existence by him. The God of the universe grants this wealth to our very selves. He says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Will we who have been honored and so possess the treasures of his kindness to be called gods then be ignorant of the measure of our own nature? Not in the least. For we have been made wise in our zeal and in our reasoning about the nature of things.

### **83. Cyril: *Contra Julianum* 9.3, 16–9.4, 18, GCS New Series 21**

*Julian posits that the Old Testament is not at all clear in revealing the Son is God with the Father, but that it rather depicts various lesser “gods” in accordance with his own polytheism. Cyril corrects the sense in which the title is granted to creatures.*

He obstinately maintains that Moses forgot to mention the “Word” altogether and that he did not know the “Son” as one co-existent with God the Father, but he rather spoke of many other gods, that is, guardian angels appointed over the nations, as he says.

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<sup>120</sup> αὐτοφῶς . . . ἀγέννητον.

<sup>121</sup> γυμνῆ κλήσει.

4. O Good Friend, when you hear the Sacred Scriptures naming some of those among the created and perfected beings gods,<sup>122</sup> remember that he who is the true God by nature has honored all the rational creation with such a name. Therefore, the divine<sup>123</sup> Paul tells us to know that the “many gods” and “lords” “in heaven” and “on earth” *are* not such but rather *are called* such, since there is only “one” who by nature is the “Father” and God over all things and with him he who is his own Word, both inseparably and co-existent within him (1 Cor. 8:4–6). We say that he is called the “Firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15) since he in grace takes the sensible and rational creation into his brotherhood, given that it was made “according to his likeness and image” (Gen. 1:26). Not only angels are called gods and sons as truly being images of God the Son, but even we ourselves. He says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Therefore, even if he addresses some of those who have been brought into being by a creative act with a title of sonship, there is but one who is Son truly and by nature, to whom we are conformed and so we enjoy the renowned and splendid name as an allotment from him by grace.

[Cyril continues by distinguishing humanity as made *in* the image and likeness of God and Christ who is that image and likeness.]

**84. Cyril of Alexandria [sp.]: *Dialogus cum Nestorio* 2.557, PG 76:249, 4–252, 2**

*The first half of the fourth century witnessed the eruption of the Christological controversies, beginning with Nestorius’s rejection of the title “God-bearer” for the Virgin Mary. Here an anonymous author presents Nestorius as employing Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) to explain how the man Jesus is rightly called “God” in only a limited way. Cyril responds with his*

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<sup>122</sup> τῶν ἐν γενητοῖς τελούντων τινάς.

<sup>123</sup> θεσπέσιος.

*own proof passage.*

Nestorius: When the Sacred Scripture narrates the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary or his death, it clearly never employs the title “God” but “Christ” or “Lord” or “Jesus,” because these three are indicative of the two natures, whether of the one or the other. For example, when the Apostle indicates for us Christ’s birth from the Virgin, he says, “God sent forth his Son, born from a woman” (Gal. 4:4). He did not say, “God sent the divine Word” but he uses the name [Son] which indicates the double origins, as God and human being, since Christ is double. For the Virgin gave birth to the Son of God in the sense in which it is said, “You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Consequently, we used to learn from Scripture that one may call [the Virgin Mother] “Christ-bearer,” “Lord-bearer,” or “Human-bearer.” But we were never taught to call the Holy Virgin the “God-bearer.”

Cyril: Isaiah cries aloud by the Spirit, “Behold, the Virgin will conceive and will bear a Son and they will call his name Emmanuel,” which means, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Therefore, the one born is God, if you please and even if you don’t.

### **85. Mark the Monk: *De Melchisedech* 10, 18–46, SC 455**

*Melchizedek appears without explanation as priest of God in Gen. 14:17–20, a passage which leads to a considerable discourse on the nature and work of Christ in the book of Hebrews (particularly chapter 7). Some wanted to identify Melchizedek as a divine being. In opposition, Mark the Monk references Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) as part of his opponents’ argument.*

We, then, having received this command and rule from the Savior, are compelled to persuade the uninstructed who are being deceived. But when [the deceivers] see that those they are tricking want to repent, they overcome them with winsome but flimsy arguments. Thus, they are ever saying, “If Melchizedek is not God by nature, we have not sinned by making a human

being God,<sup>124</sup> for it is written, ‘I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High’ (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). They do not know that this slippery mistake clearly reveals their [deficient] faith in Christ—for in this way they would think the Lord to be equal to all other human beings and not as he is, Savior and God and Master—and they set up worship of “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). Since like serpents they entwine their prey and hold fast those who wish to escape by running away, we also have to keep the commandment to “be wise as serpents” (Matt. 10:16) and to imitate them in every way, even to escape such coils of theirs by twisting the thoughts around. Like them, we can say that even if Melchizedek is God, we have not sinned in any way by deeming and confessing him a human being. For it is written: “There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, other than the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 4:12), “the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph. 1:23). Let them hear the Apostle as he enjoins us not to receive the Gospel of another preacher. “For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough” (2 Cor. 11:4, ESV). Therefore, if he seals the contents of the Gospel, what will they suffer who introduce heresies or who believe them?

**86. [Maximinus?] *Collectio Veronensis: Contra Iudaeos* 13.1–5, CCSL 87:113–15**

*Maximinus here is likely the Arian whom Augustine writes against. Here, however, this author, apparently an Arian, argues for his own position of the begotten status of Christ over against Jewish unbelief. His references Christ’s own defense of his Sonship in John 10.*

(1) The Jew calls out at this point and asks, “How do you Christians say that God has a son?”

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<sup>124</sup> ἄνθρωπον θεοποιήσαντες.

Has the invisible and incorporeal God begotten?” Again we respond to them as the Lord says, “‘I said, You are gods’ and all sons of the Most High. ‘If he called them gods’ and sons of the Most High ‘to whom the Word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be loosed,’ you are angry with me, the Lord asks, ‘because I said that I am the Son of God?’(John 10:35). ‘If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me, but if you do not wish to believe me, at least believe the works’” (cf., John 10:36–38).

(2) Then we ask, “What do the Jews think about what David undoubtedly speaks in the person of the Christ: ‘The Lord said to me, you are my Son, today I have begotten you’ (Ps. 2:7); and [114] again that most holy prophet David speaks to the Son in the person of the Father: ‘I begin with you on the day of your strength in the splendors of holy ones, I have begotten you from the womb before the morning star’ (Ps. 110:3, LXX 109:3)? Let the Jew say whom he begot or from whom.

(3) Then he asks, “Why do you believe God begat?” We respond, “The prophets said so and we believe it. For he begat, but as God—impassibly, incorruptibly, ineffably. As already stated before, the Spirit begat Spirit, God begat God of holy divinity as it was fitting for God to generate. The Lord begat a Lord; Light, Light; Splendor, Splendor; Power, Power; the King, a King; the One, a One; the Only, an Only; the Eternal, an Eternal; Strength, Strength; the Creator, a Creator. We have said all this already and we say it again as an affirmation of our position.

(4) Moreover, one cannot explain or describe what is the Father and the Son, the Son of the Father, the Word of the Father, the Strength and Wisdom of the Father in whom and through whom the Father made all things. Understand this Word to be the Son of God, whom he sent for the salvation of the world, as the prophet said: ‘He sent his Word and healed them’ (Ps. 107:20, LXX 106:20). Thus he who is the Word of the Father is called Son of the Father, not as you with

carnal and blameworthy thoughts understand us to say that God has begotten. Indeed, hear the holy prophet Isaiah saying about Christ, ‘Who will tell of his generation?’ (Isa. 53:8) Can anyone say or explain how the Father begat the Son or brought forth the Word?”

(5) The Jew says, “I want to understand how you believe these things about Christ.” To him we say, “Hear what is written as the Father speaks, ‘I begin with you on the day of your strength in the splendours of holy ones, I have begotten you from the womb before the morning star’ (Ps. 110:3, LXX 109:3). The One speaking demonstrates that there is another, that is, a second one from himself, his own Son, whom he addresses. The One speaking [115] declares that there are two persons—both himself as he speaks and the one to whom he speaks. He says, ‘I have begotten you from the womb before the morning star’ (Ps. 110: 3, LXX 109:3). Understand womb here in the sense of ‘Majesty,’ the inexpressible fullness and depth of the mystery of God, incomprehensible wisdom. I have begotten you before the morning star, meaning before the adorning of the heavens. Alternatively, it means before the beginning of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit himself is called Morning Star or Light Bringer.<sup>125</sup> He pours the light of truth and true faith into human minds. As the Morning Star, he announced over and over through the prophets the coming of the eternal sun, the Christ.”

**87. Theodoret [dub.] (also Ps.-Justin): *Quaest. et respons. ad orthodoxos* 145, 16–146, 11, Papadopoulos-Kerameus (1895)**

*This text explains that the title “god” is given to angels and human beings on the basis of an appointed function in specific situation. It is thus conditional and relational and not ontological.*

Question: If an angel is higher than a human being and the Scriptures call human beings

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<sup>125</sup> The Latin for “morning star” here is *Lucifer*, which also translates as Light Bringer.

gods, how is it that it does not follow that we may also call the angels gods?

Answer: The many angels who by God's arrangement have appeared to human beings or spoken to them have also had the title of "god" themselves, like the one who spoke to Jacob (Gen. 32:22–32) and to Moses (Exod. 3:4–17). And human beings have been called gods too. The rank and the title of God was given in each case because of the need at hand. Once the need had been met, those who had received the title of "god" for the sake of that need ceased to be called gods. For example, when he appointed an angel to the leadership of the people, he told Moses about him: "Do not disobey him because my name rests on him" (Exod. 23:21). And when he appointed the rulers to judge the people, he says to them, "Judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24) because judgment belongs to God. And again he was saying to them, "I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), which means the same as, "I have given you my honor and rank and title. Thus, judge the people just as I am judging them."

Question: If the word "God" is transcendent and the word "man" falls short of that, how is it not out of order for the human being to be addressed as god?

Answer: This question does arise neither from Christian nor non-Christian<sup>126</sup> presuppositions. In each case, the title of the Transcendent One has been transferred to those who are inferior according to the glory of each. One should not invent dilemmas from what we agree on but from issues that are uncertain.

### **88. Acts of the Council of Ephesus: *Against Nestorius*, ACO 1.1.5.30, 10–19**

*In this brief explanation of Heb. 2:14–15, Cyril of Alexandria places Ps. 82:6–7 (LXX*

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<sup>126</sup> Lit. "This question fits neither the Christian nor the Greek."

81:6–7) in the context of salvation and sin, with an emphasis more on filiation than deification.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Heb. 2:14–15, ESV). He says “the children” in this passage, clearly meaning us who are on earth, according to what is sung in the psalms as if spoken from the persona of God: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). For all of us who have come to please God and to the kindness which unites to him by nature<sup>127</sup> are [his] children and no one would have fallen away from fellowship with him,<sup>128</sup> except for what David says: we die “as human beings,” we fall “as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7), since we subject our own mind to the passions of the flesh.

**89. Acts of the Council of Ephesus: *Against Nestorius*, ACO 1.1.6.65, 10–36<sup>129</sup>**

*In opposition to Nestorius’s teaching that one must distinguish the divine Word from the man who was joined to him to become the Savior, Cyril appeals to the traditional teaching of the teach and the recognition that the Word himself accomplishes the work of salvation in person.*

Confess with us one Christ, and do not divide him into two anymore. Stop saying: “He who is consubstantial with us and has been ‘anointed to preach remission to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind’” (Luke 4:18). What will then happen to the teaching of the theologians who have become the spiritual guides of everyone under heaven? For they have proclaimed that the

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<sup>127</sup> ἦκεν εἰς τὸ θεῶι δοκοῦν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐνοῦσαν ἡμερότητα κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῶι.

<sup>128</sup> τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν οἰκειότητος.

<sup>129</sup> This is a reworking of Cyril of Alexandria, *Five Tomes against Nestorius*, A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church: Anterior to the Division of East and West (Oxford: Parker, and Rivingtons, 1881), 104–5, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.ah3x2b>.

Word from God the Father himself was made savior and redeemer of all, not as though a man other than He were mediating, like Moses for instance. Rather, he has come down to us in bodily likeness and form, for thus has he been anointed as high priest and apostle. And indeed, he rebuked the Jews, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (John 10:34–36). He humbly emptied himself so that he might save everyone under heaven. Why will we exclude him from the most divine and truly marvelous achievements that have been done for us? Why would we say that someone else besides him has been sent as consubstantial with ourselves? Moreover, is it not better to say and even to decide to think that he has both been sent and been made consubstantial with us, i.e., as a human being, even while he remains consubstantial with God the Father, too, as he was and is God, just as has been thought? For he is what he was, even when he assumed humanity and, having an identity of essence with God the Father in heaven, he knew how to grasp the likeness with us too. He has been established as mediator, since by a union of relation he joins in himself things completely disparate from one another with respect to the order of their natures. For he who is God by nature has truly been made a human being, that we too might be called offspring, no more of the first [Adam], that is, of the earthy one, to whom God said, “You are earth and to earth shall you return” (Gen. 3:19), who consigns humanity to death, but we are offspring of the second [Adam], who has come from above and out of heaven (1 Cor. 15:45–49). I mean Christ who restores us to unfading life and renders incorruptible that which is subject to death and frees from sins that which was held by the coils of sin.

**90. Acts of the Council of Ephesus: *Against Nestorius*, ACO 1.1.6.92, 14–25<sup>130</sup>**

*A further development of the argument against Nestorius leads Cyril to glory in the greatness of God's love who made none other than his Only-Begotten Son the price for our salvation.*

Hence, I think that the inspired Paul, too, in wonder expresses in every letter the love of God the Father toward us. For he said, “What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us who is against us? He that spared not his own Son but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him too freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31–32) Granted, there are a great many sons by grace and through adoption (for we also have been called “gods and all sons of the Most High” [Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6]), but one and only one is he who is so by nature and is his own, that is, God the Word who is from him even when he became flesh. For thus we say that he has been given for all, even as he himself says somewhere, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Therefore, he who was given is only-begotten, for only the Word who is both from and in God the Father sprang from his essence.

**91. (Ps.-)Cyril: *Against Those Unwilling to Confess the Holy Virgin to be the Theotokos*, ACO 1.1.7.30, 7–28<sup>131</sup>**

To understand that the one who suffered in the flesh and rose again was the Lord and not, as they say, a man having the Word indwelling, let them hear what Paul so boldly writes to the Romans about Abraham: “But the words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake

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<sup>130</sup> This is a reworking of Cyril of Alexandria, *Five Tomes Against Nestorius*, 157.

<sup>131</sup> This is a reworking of Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Those Who Are Unwilling to Confess that the Holy Virgin Is Theotokos*, ed. Daryle R. Lamoureux, trans. George Dion Dragas, *Patristic and Ecclesiastical Texts and Translations 1* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2004), 63.

alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 4:23–24, ESV). You have heard how the one who was raised was designated Lord. Stop being offended by the things that are said on account of the divine economy [of salvation].

[Paul] feels the need to add this to what was said lest anyone suppose that [Jesus], like us, is called “God” and “Lord” and “Son” by grace. For if we are being called gods, we are nevertheless reminded of the measure of our weakness: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6) is followed immediately by “but you are dying as human beings” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). For it is clear that we have come to be addressed this way by grace. But that is not the case with him, for he has this designation with a glory appropriate to God. For he is not merely called “God” but “God over all and blessed forever” (Rom. 9:5). Further, he is called “Lord” but not only in name as we are but “The Lord of glory” (James 2:1) and “Lord of all” (Rom. 10:12), as Peter (*sic*) taught. And so he is called “Son” not in the common way that we are called this,<sup>132</sup> but he is called “only Son” and “true” according to essence,<sup>133</sup> as John says, “And we are in the true God and in his Son. This is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

The Apostle Paul very clearly differentiates him from the many others as the one and only true Son. For he writes as follows: “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things” (1 Cor. 8:5–6).

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<sup>132</sup> ἀπλῶς, Dragas: simply a son like us.

<sup>133</sup> κατ’ οὐσίαν.

**92. Ps.-Basil of Seleucia: *Sermones xli*, serm. 23, PG 85:273, 36–276, 5**

*This author recognizes that demons and even the devil address Jesus as the “Son of God” in the Gospel narratives, and yet their strategies against him reveal that they could not have truly understood that he was “God” in the full sense of the term.*

“What do we have to do with you, Son of God?” (Matt. 8:29)

They call him God’s Son but they did not understand that the Son is God. For those have also been called sons of God who through the height of virtue have attained an association<sup>134</sup> with God. And so [it is written], “Israel is my first born” (Exod. 4:22); and again, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6); and again, “The sons of God beheld the daughters of human beings” (Gen. 6:2). The name is not only an indication of nature but also of association. The devil also showed this ignorance [of the Son’s divinity] the times [he addressed Christ] at the Jordan. For although he heard the voice coming from heaven, “This is my beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17), he was speaking to him in ignorance, “If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down” (Matt. 4:3 et passim). For if he understood that he was talking to God, how did he try to frighten him with the presentation of a fall? For the nature of God is susceptible to neither depth nor height.

**93. Isidore of Pelusium: *Epistulae* 3.31, PG 78:1–29**

*For Christians like Isidore who would affirm the Nicene Creed, some Bible passages remained problematic in that they implied that the Son had a creaturely nature. Various solutions had been discovered, but here Isidore’s is one of the more creative efforts.*

Letter 31 to Ophelius Grammaticus

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<sup>134</sup> οἰκειότητα.

How it is said that Christ is “The firstborn of every nature”? (cf., Col. 1:15)<sup>135</sup>

Since you disregard trite answers, I can speak what I think, if I might imagine breaking open a certain newer way to interpret the phrase. “The firstborn” (πρωτότοκος, Col. 1:15), when accented on the second syllable, means the one who was born first. But if accented on the penult (πρωτοτόκος), it indicates the one who has first begotten a child. Especially you people who like to imitate Homer know this very well. For he says that the one who has begotten first is πρωτοτόκος. It is reasonable then—or rather necessary—to think that the inspired Paul has employed some such understanding here, as he does not teach that [the Son] is created first of creation (banish the thought!), but he calls him the radiance of glory and the exact imprint of the fatherly nature (Heb. 1:3). But [the Son] has begotten first, that is, he has made the creation, so that, with the third syllable accented, he is first Maker, not first made, first Creator, not first creation. But no one should be taken aback if creation is here taken to be a kind of child since Scriptures say elsewhere, “You have forsaken the God who gave you birth” (Deut. 32:18) and “I bore sons and I exalted them” (Isa. 1:2) and “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

For since by giving birth God engendered without any suffering and created without any suffering on his part and, as is appropriate to God,<sup>136</sup> he creates without any effort, the Scripture uses such words. This does not mean that we should understand the work of creation as a birth or birthing as a creation act, as the wicked heretics presume to teach. But we should understand how it indicates the simplicity of God and his freedom from suffering.

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<sup>135</sup> Col. 1:15 reads, “Firstborn of all creation” (ESV), but Origen calls Christ “the Firstborn of all created nature” in *Cels.* 6.17.

<sup>136</sup> θεοπρεπῶς.

#### 94. Isidore of Pelusium: *Epistulae* 3.237, PG 78:2–24

*Psalm 82 (LXX 81) sometimes comes into play for interpretations which make absolute, universal statements about the sinfulness of humanity. That is the case here as Isidore concludes that those who are truly have in some way transcended their own humanity.*

Regarding the verse, “Every man seems righteous” (Prov. 21:2).

Many human beings (I hesitate to say all, although that is what the Scripture seems to say) enjoy the delusion of their own righteousness. They do not actually welcome righteousness but make comparison between themselves and those who are less righteous. For they don’t ascertain how the divine commandments themselves stand against them, nor do they order their own life to this standard. Rather, they adapt their own way of life without concern for those near them. That is why the verse you wish to understand says, “Every man appears righteous in his own eyes” (Prov. 21:2). He is blind to the good accomplishments of those nearby but he sees their defects keenly. It’s just as when vultures light upon dead bodies after flying over meadows and gardens.

Then the Scripture adds, “But may the Lord lead the hearts” (Prov. 21:2b), meaning either the hearts of those who have manifestly banished such a delusion or those who have ordered their life according to the divine commands or those who have transcended what it means to be a human being.<sup>137</sup> These have come to a greater order and dignity<sup>138</sup> by having been drawn up through the best way of life, just as it has been said, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

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<sup>137</sup> ἢ τῶν ὑπερβεβηκότων τὸ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι.

<sup>138</sup> κρείττονα τάξιν τε καὶ ἀξίαν.

**95. Ps.-Hesychius of Jerusalem: *Commentarius brevis*, Psalm 50 (LXX 49) §1, 1–4, Jagic (1917)**

*This (very) brief commentary note answers the most pressing question of Psalm 50:1 (LXX 49:1)—who are the “gods”?*

“God of gods” does not mean God of visible gods, i.e., idols, but of spiritual gods,<sup>139</sup> about whom it has been said, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Theirs is a heavenly life.

**96. Ps.-Hesychius of Jerusalem: *Commentarius brevis*, Psalm 136 (LXX 135) §2, 1–6, Jagic (1917)**

*When the Scriptures call God the “God of gods,” what gods are meant? Again, this brief commentary dismisses any thought of God being the God of idols and ascribes to him his fitting rule over the saints.*

“Give thanks to God,” to the God of the saints about whom it is said, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), for he is not the God of the vain idol-gods. Give thanks to the Lord. For there are many lords on the earth but there is only one Lord of all who is in heaven.

**97. Ps.-Hesychius of Jerusalem: *Commentarius in Psalmos 77–99 on Psalm 82 (LXX 81)*, PG 55:731, 29–732, 2; 732, 24–68**

*In this commentary on Psalm 82 (LXX 81), the author begins with the *skopos* or summary of the text. The psalm first focuses on the rebuke and admonition of judges and rulers, but shifts to address all of humanity at verse 6, since all human beings were called “gods” in being made in his image. It concludes with the scene of judgement and a unique understanding of God’s “inheritance” among the nations, such that he awards to each category of people their due “portion.”*

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<sup>139</sup> τῶν νοητῶν.

“A Psalm. Pertaining to Asaph” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1, NETS).

The superscription of the psalm is concise. The subject of the psalm includes an exhortation to righteousness and a charge that they have failed in this.

“God stood in the assembly of gods and in their midst he distinguishes among gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). This is a great demonstration of how God bestows loving honor on us in that the Creator shares his own title with the creation. Although he himself is God par excellence, he grants that others be named this by grace, as many as have and keep their initial worthiness by their zeal for God, the ruler of all. Therefore, he designed them as ruling gods among the people, and Moses also spoke about them: “You shall not revile gods, nor curse a ruler of your people” (Exod. 22:28, LXX 22:27). God honors those of them who tell the truth and do not deceive with pretense but preserve the great dignity of prophecy or of priesthood or of military command, with the result that he stands in their assembly, as the Psalmist says.

But he judges those who do deeds unworthy of the afforded honor, as in the presence of the whole of creation he strips them of their honor and stature. He exposes them as those who had obtained authority to rule but they were ruled by wickedness instead. These the prophet both upbraids and exhorts in what follows: “How long will you judge with injustice and receive the faces of sinners?” (Ps. 82:2, LXX 81:2). “How long?” he enjoined, showing that they spent time in wickedness and do not realize the patience of God. They are not entirely cognizant of the fact that the time passes and runs out, after which time punishment is coming to the unjust. Therefore they judge unjustly and they receive the faces of sinners, although one should always stand before God who desires justice. That’s why in each judgement the face of each who comes forward is his own. Therefore, Moses says, “You will not receive a face in judgment, because judgment is the Lord’s” (Deut. 1:17). But why does he say, “You receive the face of sinners”?

Since everyone is busy about perverting justice and doing violence to judgment against his neighbor, each is truly a sinner, even if he is dressed up with the outward appearance of justice.

He adds an interlude,<sup>140</sup> since he shifts from rebuke to counsel. “Judge for the orphan and the poor, and establish justice for the meek and the day-laborer” (Ps. 82:3, LXX 81:3). He does not say, “Judge for the righteous” nor “for the prophet” nor “for the priest” about whom God orders, “Do not touch my anointed ones and do not do wrong to my prophets” (1 Chron. 16:22). But he commands to judge for “the orphan and the poor and the meek and the day-laborer.” Why? Because it is fitting for the former to suffer wrong, as even Paul would say, “Why not rather be defrauded?” (1 Cor. 6:7). It is not tolerable for the latter to be wronged because of their present weak condition due either to age or poverty. For this reason, the lawgiver is zealously devoted to them.

“Deliver the poor and the needy from the sinner’s hand, rescue him” (Ps. 82:4, LXX 81:4). He preaches about them as about wild beasts who delight in unrighteousness or plunder, as he says elsewhere, “He lurks in a hiding place like a lion in his den” (Ps. 10:9, LXX 9:30)

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What of this? Listen: “Let all the foundations of the earth be shaken” (Ps. 82:5, LXX 81:5). If the earth’s foundations are being shaken, how will those foundations yet remain? But while they are remaining, why are we plundering our brother and devouring the poor from whom we find no advantage for ourselves?

“I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). When did he establish that all are gods and sons

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<sup>140</sup> The Hebrew psalter is punctuated by the word *Selah* (which the LXX renders *diapsalma*), which this author understands to be a musical interlude allowing for a shift in the message.

of the Most High? For he is no longer speaking about the rulers alone but about all of humanity. Without doubt this happened when he made the human creature and he gave him such a dignity by definition:<sup>141</sup> “Let us make the human being in our image and likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heaven and the cattle and all the earth and all the creeping things” (Gen. 1:26).

Hence, if they had continued to preserve this and not handed the image of God over to disobedience, they would not have been condemned to death. For arrogance against God is equivalent to being mindless of his honor and means to suffer the same things that the devil did. Thus, he says, “You die like human beings,” showing that death is a human experience. All the same, it would have been possible not to die if we had kept God’s law from the beginning. For our nature gained both of these realities [to die like humans and fallenness like the devil].

He says, “You fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7), meaning the devil. He had been appointed with authority to rule among the angels. Thus Paul says, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities” (Eph. 6:12, ESV). Being exalted by desires for greater things, he fell down. That’s how it is, too, with the human being. For, after hearing what the serpent said, “For God knows that when you eat from it,” that is, from the tree, “your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5), Adam yielded himself to disobedience so that he was necessarily condemned with him through the same experience and fall.

“Arise, O God, judge the earth, because you will have an inheritance from among all the nations” (Ps. 82:8, LXX 81:8). The prophet does not mean a present inheritance but one to come. Thus he calls on God to arise and to judge the world, clearly meaning the human being. When he

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<sup>141</sup> ὄρον αὐτῷ τοιοῦτον ἀξιώματος ἔθετο.

arises, he will leave an inheritance to all the nations. He bequeaths the fitting portion to each, something for the humble, something for the self-controlled, something for the merciful, something else for the immoral, something else for the unchaste, yet another thing for the greedy. For he has named the nations not according to the different languages they use but according to the different kinds of lives they lead.

**98. Arnobius the Younger: *Commentarii in Psalmos*, Psalm 82 (LXX 81), 1–33, CCSL 25**

*Arnobius provides a spiritual interpretation of Psalm 82 (LXX 81) which ranges from the significance of calling human beings gods to the failure of the Jewish leaders to recognize Christ to the call for Christians to put aside hatred and await the Lord's return.*

Generally speaking, anything can be granted an honorific title, but this particular case of the title “God” comes [to him] through the incomprehensible nature of his majesty by which he is God. Nevertheless it is said to a human being, “I have made you a god for Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1). A human being is called the lord, although God alone is the Lord. A human being is called holy, although God alone is holy. A human being is called good, although no one is good but God alone (Luke 18:19). This is a likeness of God in human beings because those things which God naturally possesses a human being receives as an image. The more he will be like him the more he will copy his likeness by his own character.

Hence in the present psalm, God himself speaks to those whom he entrusted with judicial authority. He says, “I have said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you will die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:6–7, LXX 81:6–7). One of the princes means, for example, the devil and Judas the traitor and Saul and Jeroboam or any of those who possessed leadership. So even you will fall because you judge with partiality. You too take the faces of sinners; you do not judge for the orphan and the needy; the humble and poor you do not

defend; you have not rescued the poor nor freed the needy from the hand of sinners.

Even if these things may be said generally about judges and the poor, nevertheless the prophecy of the poem also calls out to the Pharisees together with the chief priests. For they did not know nor understand, because it was said to them: “Unless you believe, you will not understand” (Isa. 7:9). If they had believed, they would have understood him to be their Lord, him whom they were denying and persecuting with deep hatred, faithful though he was. Granted, he was not Lord as your unbelief would expect. He was, however, a brother, a Hebrew born of Hebrews, and you were saying that his parents [and] his brothers were among you. Tell then what the reason for the hatred was. Why, they ask, does he heal the sick on the Sabbath? The doctor deserves to encounter this hatred for the health of the brothers and on account of his charity to be harassed by your excoriations.

Indeed, because “he who hates his brother walks in darkness” (1 John 2: 11) and all the foundations of the earth will be moved when God arises to judge the earth (Ps. 82:5, 8, LXX 81:5, 8), we withdraw from hating the brothers. For “he who hates his brother does not know where he is going” (1 John 2:11) because the darkness surrounds him. Therefore, let us live eagerly awaiting what the end of the psalm foretells so that, when the Lord will arise to judge the earth, he may take us too as his inheritance among all the nations, as He rules forever and ever. Amen.

**99. Gennadius I: *Frag. in epistulam ad Romanos*, Staab (1933):377, 21–29**

*Gennadius here finds significance in Paul’s saying of Christians that “these” are the sons of God. “These” of the New Testament are implicitly contrasted with “those” of the Old Testament who were sons of God under the law.*

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

For those who are led by the Spirit of God, that is, the spiritual and not the merely soulish ones, truly secure for themselves the status of being the sons of God. He said this to distinguish between those named “sons of God” under the law and those [who are made sons] on account of God’s providential election<sup>142</sup> as concerns the rest of humanity. [About the former] he says, “You spoke to your sons in a vision” (Ps. 89:19, LXX 88:20), and “Israel, my firstborn son,” (Exod. 4:22) and “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). In order to distinguish those who are sons of God by Christ and those others, he said, “These are the sons of God.”

**100. Ps.-Gelasius of Cyzicus: *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.8.1–4, GCS, New Series 9:42**

*This report of the opening of the Council of Nicaea by Emperor Constantine contains (fabricates?) this scene not previously reported by Eusebius’s eye-witness account. In it, Constantine honors the bishops as “gods” with authority to judge the matters of the church.*

When the appointed time had come, the king took taken his seat in the midst and, once a fitting silence had come upon all for a time, he ordered the pamphlets [of accusations against the bishops] to be brought forward. And upon receiving them, he put them to his chest since he did not want to inquire into the things written there. He said, “As God has appointed you both priests and rulers to judge and distinguish among the masses and to be gods and since you surpass the limit of all human beings, according to what is said, ‘I said, you are gods and all sons of the Most High’ (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6) and ‘God stood in the assembly of gods’ (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1), it is necessary to disregard ordinary affairs in order to make all haste about these divine matters.” Next he ordered fire to be brought and he commanded the pamphlets to be set aflame, for he took

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<sup>142</sup> κηδεμονία, a rare term also employed by Theodore of Mopsuestia in his commentary on Mal. 2:10.

care that no one outside the assembly should come to know the discordant efforts of some of the bishops. The godly reverence of the king toward the priests of God was such that it amazed all who were of sound mind.

**101. Cyril of Alexandria: *Catena in Joannem* 303, 30–37, Cramer, *Catena Graecorum partum in N.T.*, vol. 2 (1841) (TLG)**

*Cyril reflects on Jesus' argument with the Jews in John 10 and observes how Jesus implicitly grants their understanding of his high claim about his own identity.*

“You make yourself God” (John 10:33). At that time he himself not only did not correct their opinion and say, “I did not say that I am God nor that I am of equal power or the same substance as the Father.” Rather, he does the opposite, affirming their opinion, even the opinion of those who were becoming infuriated by these thoughts. For he says, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, You are gods?’ etc. (John 10:34) What he means is this: if those who received this by grace are not to be blamed when they call themselves gods, how am I justly being censured when I have this by nature?”

**102. Theognius: *Homilia in Ramos palamarum* §7, 1–12, Noret, *Analecta Bollandiana* 89 (TLG)**

*Considering the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Christ, Theognius lingers on Christ's title as the “God of gods” who reigns among those who aim for immortality through their meditation on God's Holy Word.*

Long ago, the prophet Zechariah also prophesied this as he proclaimed, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, . . . Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech. 9:9, ESV). David, too, says, “The God of gods will be seen in Zion” (Ps. 84:7, LXX 83:8), that is,

God will be with human beings, for he calls those human beings who aim to live without corruption<sup>143</sup> gods. Indeed, the Scripture says, “If you wish,<sup>144</sup> you are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), that is, those who walk in his way and “on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers” (Ps. 1:2b–3, ESV).

**103. Procopius of Gaza: *Comm. in Genesim* 3.13, 23–35 (=Didymus), GCS, New Series 22:153**

*Genesis 3:22, a difficult passage which drew various efforts of clarification among the Fathers, has God grant that the fallen Adam has become “like one of us.” Procopius’s citation of Didymus the Blind is not alone in pointing out that Adam had actually become like Satan whose disobedience occasioned his own fall.*

But many also say that that the expression “as one of our midst”<sup>145</sup> (Gen. 3:22) references the angels, as when a king speaks to his guards. They also say that he did not say “as one of us” or “as we” or “as I,” but “as one *out of* our midst.” For this one fell *out of* heaven<sup>146</sup> as the Psalmist says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High, but you die as human beings and fall as one of the rulers.” For that ruler and god (not god by nature but by deification)<sup>147</sup> fell out. For although there had been several rulers, one has fallen. Similarly the phrase “one of you will betray me” clearly indicates the one falling out of the apostolic rank (John 13:21). And by

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<sup>143</sup> τοὺς ἐπ’ ἀφθαρσίᾳ βιοῦντας ἀνθρώπους. Liddell Scott Jones ἐπί + dative: B.1.i—of condition or circumstances in which one is; B.2.b—fly toward and settle upon a place. B.III.2—of an end or purpose, for, with a view toward gaining. Cf., Rom. 2:7, 1 Cor. 15:42, 54, Eph. 6:24.

<sup>144</sup> The text is emended: εἰ θέλετε.

<sup>145</sup> ἐξ ἡμῶν.

<sup>146</sup> ἐξέπεσε. Metzler takes this to mean Adam, though Satan seems a more plausible reference. Metzler, GCS 23:139.

<sup>147</sup> κατὰ θεοποιίαν.

saying, “Behold, he has become as one of us” he adds how by saying, “to know good and evil.”

**104. Procopius of Gaza: *Comm. in Genesim* 6.1, 1–21, GCS, New Series 22:188–89**

*Procopius weaves together comments from Cyril of Alexandria and an unidentified source to explain Gen. 6:2, a difficult passage which depicts the “sons of God” marrying the “daughters of human beings” and the instigation for the flood.*

“The sons of God, seeing the daughters of human beings, etc.” (Gen. 6:2) [Cyril:] It is also written “angels of God.” Some say that the Holy Scriptures mean the apostate powers, although it is impossible and against nature for there to be a union between angels and women, even if the demons are full of every wickedness. But [those who hold this position] say that the [demons] indwelt men to effect the unions through them. But the Scripture did not say this and [moreover] one could say this about all sinners at all times. How then does the Scripture say this is a unique occurrence? [Unidentified source:] But that it refers to human beings here is clear from what follows: “For the Lord God said, My Spirit will not abide in these human beings” (Gen. 6:3), no longer naming them “angels,” but human beings. Furthermore, they have become human beings by getting mixed up with those who think human thoughts. For what sin did human beings commit if the angels of God took the women by force? Therefore, it calls “angels” and “sons of God” the elect race of those who were [descended] from Seth and Enosh, whom he was giving these names on account of their sanctity. As it is written, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). But [he called] “human beings” those who were from Cain, who invented the harp and zither and metalworking (Gen. 4:21f), [not identified] for they think about human things as those who “rise up to play after they eat and drink” (Exod. 32:6).

**105. Procopius of Gaza: *Comm. in Genesim* 6.3, 34–44, GCS, New Series 22:192**

*Procopius cites Didymus's explanation of Gen. 6:5, "The Lord saw . . . everyone occupies their thoughts with wicked things continually in their hearts, etc." How did this judgment not include Noah?*

[Didymus:] The "seeing" is also a human expression [about God]. For he had seen previously but now he observes with an eye toward judgment. For when he does not wish to punish sinners, it is said that [God] "does not see" them but that he is "sleeping." But he arises as one who was sleeping and intoxicated and, after having been very patient, suddenly brings on the punishments in excess.

But the phrase "everyone occupies their thought" is written in place of "for the most part," as we also find in the verses, "Every brother will strike with his heel and every friend goes about deceitfully" (Jer. 9:4). Alternatively, it is that Noah was no longer a human being,<sup>148</sup> for "I said, you are gods" (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Such is the case also with the verse, "I said in my astonishment, every human being is a liar" (Ps. 116:11, LXX 115:2), and "for there is jealousy and strife, are you not human beings?" (1 Cor. 3:3).

**106. Procopius of Gaza: *Comm. in Genesim* 17.1, 35–46, GCS, New Series 22:239**

*This explanation of the covenant sign of circumcision granted to Abraham (Gen. 17,11–15) interprets it as evidence of his spiritual progress and an indication of the kind of advance which his "children" will made after him. Procopius follows an unidentified Father at this point.*

[Not identified:] For the Savior says, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). But for the one who had made progress, God changed his

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<sup>148</sup> ἢ ὅτι ὁ Νῶε οὐκ ἐστὶ ἦν ἄνθρωπος.

name, not merely giving him this name but also a sign of his advance. God himself took the initiative in assuring Abraham’s own convictions about his progress. For one has particular confidence in his own advancing when a teacher attests it for him, but how much more when God does it. Reasonably, he also causes him to grow. For the one laying for himself a foundation for initial virtue God further grants the end as he causes him to grow by stretching, whence [the text] clearly states [I will multiply you] “very, very” [much] (Gen. 17:6).<sup>149</sup> But the cause of this accommodation to and love for humanity is the work of Christ,<sup>150</sup> through whom he would make human beings gods.<sup>151</sup> Hence, he says, also your seed after you” (Gen. 17:7).

**107. Anonymous: *Contra philosophos*, disp. 4, 1238–301, CCSL 58A:237–38**

*This text imagines a conversation between “Augustine” (the name of the greatest theologian in the west) and “Porphyry” (the name of one of the greatest Neoplatonic philosophers). Following an argument which Augustine actually makes in book 8 of The City of God, the Christian can acknowledge that there are created immortal spiritual beings which might be designated “gods,” but still refuses to offer them worship. The common ground of understanding is not sufficient to justify a common practice with the pagans.*

[237] Porphyry: We Platonists prefer to call them gods rather than demons and to number them about whom our founder and master Plato writes as those gods created by the Most High God. One can find in our books that this is the Platonic position.

Augustine: We do not need to be occupied with you in a controversy about words. If there

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<sup>149</sup> At this point, GCS footnote 1310 indicates that a different Greek text is being followed, one which duplicates σφόδρα. Procopius of Gaza, *Prokop von Gaza: Eclogarum in Libros Historicos Veteris Testamenti Epitome*, vol. 1, *Der Genesiskommentar*, GCS, New Series 22:239.

<sup>150</sup> ἡ τοῦ Χριστοῦ οἰκονομία.

<sup>151</sup> δι’ οὗ θεοῦς ἤμελλον ἐργάζεσθαι.

are such immortals as are made by the Most High God and if they do not come about by themselves but by him by whom they were made, you are saying that they are blessed by adhering to him. You are saying what we say, whatever name you give them. There is hardly any argument between us and you about this name because you call this sort of immortal and blessed creature a god. For in our sacred books one reads, “The God of gods has spoken” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1) and “We acknowledge the God of gods” (Ps. 136:2, LXX 135:2) and “The great King above all gods” (Ps. 95:3, LXX 94:4). But where it is written, “Terrible above all gods,” it then explains what it means, for it follows with, “Because all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens” (Ps. 96:4, LXX 95:4). Thus he said, “Above all gods” but added “of the nations,” which means those the nations deem for gods but are demons. Thus, [he is] “terrible.” In this terror, they were saying to the Lord, “Have you come to destroy us?” (Mark 1:24).

Indeed, where it is said, “God of gods,” one cannot understand “God of demons.” Further, may “A great King above all gods” never be understood to mean a great king over all demons. But the same Scriptures call human beings in the people of God “gods.” He said, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). It is possible to understand God as the God of these gods as he is called “God of gods” (Ps. 50:1, LXX 49:1; Ps. 136:2, LXX 135:2) and a great King of these gods as he is called “A great King over all gods” (Ps. 95:3, LXX 94:4). Yet we must further ask: If human beings are called gods because they are in the people of God, whom God addresses through angels or through human beings, how much more are the immortals worthy of the same name? I mean those who enjoy that beatitude which human beings desire to attain by worshipping God. What will we respond except that it is not in vain that human beings are expressly called gods in the Sacred Scriptures? Aren’t they gods as much as

those immortal and blessed creatures whose equals we are foretold to become in the resurrection, lest on account of their excellence our unfaithful weakness would dare to establish one of them as a god for us? (It is easy to avoid this in regard to the human being.)

And clearly human beings in the people of God ought to be called gods so that they become certain and believing that he is their God who is called “God of gods” (Ps. 49:1, LXX 50:1; Ps. 136:2, LXX 135:2). For even if those immortal and blessed creatures who are in heaven are called gods, they are nevertheless not called “gods of gods,” that is, “gods of the human beings established in the people of God,” to whom it is said, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Here is what the Apostle says, “Even if there are those who are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, nevertheless for us there is one God and Father, from who are all things and we in him and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and we through him” (1 Cor. 8:5–6).

Although they [the angels] are such that we know them to be immortal and blessed, whatever they are called, they are nevertheless made and created. They are not mediators for us wretched mortals needing to be led to immortal blessedness, for they differ from us twice over [by being both immortal and blessed]. But others [demons] are mediators since they have a common immortality with those superior to them and a common misery with those inferior (because they are miserable due to their wickedness) and they are able to envy our blessedness rather than to offer it. Therefore, you friends of demons have nothing that you can present to us capable [of answering the question] why we ought to worship as helpers those whom we ought rather avoid as deceivers. You think that those who are good and thus not only immortal but also blessed and who have attained to the name of gods after death on account of a blessed life ought to be worshipped with holy sacrifices. Whatever sort they are and whatever they might be worthy

to be called, we do not wish to worship through such religious devotion any but the one God by whom the created beings are blessed through participating in him. With his assistance, we will diligently explore this matter.

**108. “Disciple of Cassiodorus”:** *Exp. St. Pauli Epistulae ad 1 Cor. 8*, PL 68:525, 47–58

*This anonymous Christian continues the argument against Arianism by positing the flexibility of the titles “god” and “lord.” The Son of God bears both titles properly with the Father, even if others may bear them in a looser sense.*

Whether in heaven or on earth, even if there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God and Father from whom are all things and we are in him. (Cf., 1 Cor. 8:5–6a)

[By “gods” and “lords,” he means] angels and saints, to whom God said, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6) and lords, and their holy ones whom they will judge. Or one might say that they are thus gods in heaven and lords on earth.

The Arians disparage this by denying that Christ is God just because he is called Lord. One should respond to them: If the Son then will not be God because the Father is the one God, then the Father too will not be Lord because Christ is the one Lord. [Paul continues:] “And one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him” (1 Cor. 8:6b).

Understand the Trinity where [there is discussion of the one] who made everything from nothing (*ex nihilo*).

**109. Verecundus of Junca:** *Comm. cantica eccl., Cant. Deut., 5*, 51–65, CCSL 93:15

*Both Moses and Paul say that God is without sin. This also applies to Christ, but not to the human “gods” who are born into the fallen condition of humanity.*

“And there is no iniquity in him” (Deut. 32:5). The Apostle followed a general treatment of

this question: “What will we say? Is there iniquity with God? Far be it! But God is true and every human being a liar” (Rom. 3:4). Iniquity does not accord with equity nor is it possible for a lie to be mixed up with the truth. But whenever we think certain things are arranged incongruously, we do not intellectually follow what they become but he manages everything justly and mercifully. We understand that these things are spoken mystically about Christ, whom the Jews were thinking to be a sinner and a liar and murdered by hanging him on a cross. The prophet speaks about this: God is faithful and there is no iniquity in him, because he committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth (cf., 1 Pet. 2:22; Isa. 53:9). And even human beings are called gods: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). But no one of them can excuse himself of iniquity because there is no one who has been born who has not acted impiously. Yet he was born who is faithful “and there is no iniquity in him.”

**110. Primasius: *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* 5.21, 123–34, CCSL 92:289–90**

*Primasius comments on the names of the tribes of Israel found on the walls of the New Jerusalem. He also identifies the “angels” as their leaders, who are elsewhere called “gods.”*

He says clearly, “The names written are of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel” (Rev. 21:12). At this point, the same Apostle boldly proclaims [the Israelites to be those] “who are my relatives according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption of sons and the glory and the testaments and the law and the obedience and the promises, to whom belong the fathers and from whom comes the Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever” (Rom. 9:3–5). I think that these angels represent the elders and nobles, by whose guidance and oversight that race was wondrously guided. If we recall that they are often called gods, why is it strange if we believe they are called angels? It says, “He will be brought before the gods” (Exod. 22:8) and “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX

81:6), so that the scope shows the whole of the people, which consists of both rulers and people.

**111. Gregory the Great: *Homiliae in Hiezechihalem* 2.3, 132–50, CCSL 142:241<sup>152</sup>**

*Gregory the Great comments on the passage: “Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep” (Ezek. 40:6, ESV). Recognizing that Christ is the “gate” (John 10:9), he allegorically interprets the patriarchs of Israel as the threshold which leads to him.*

And the threshold of the gate was measured to be one reed long, that is, one threshold was one reed in length. After it is said, “the threshold of the gate,” why does he immediately add after, “one threshold,” except that he is clearly intimating that another lower threshold is meant here? But the gate arises from the threshold so that it might be an opening. If, therefore, the door is the Lord, who is the threshold of this gate but those ancient patriarchs from whose offspring the Lord deigned to become incarnate? As it is said through Paul: “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever” (Rom. 9:5, ESV). Now one must observe in this thought of Paul that even other human beings are called gods, just as it is said to Moses, “I will set you as a god for Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1). Also, the Lord says through the Psalmist, “I said, You are gods,” and again, “God stood in the assembly of the gods” (Ps. 82:6, 1, LXX 81:6, 1). But it is one thing to be called god by proclamation, another [to be God] by nature. Even if Moses was set as a god for Pharaoh, he was only called a god among all others, not a God over all. However, he who became incarnate within the womb of the Virgin is called God over all things. And so the ancient patriarchs are the threshold of the gate, from whom he was born who opened the entrance of the heavenly kingdom

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<sup>152</sup> Another English translation is available: Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Theodosia Tomkinson, 2nd ed. (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2008).

to us.

**112. Pamphilus: *Diversorum capitum seu difficultatum solutio*, Question 9, 44–59, CCSG 19:24**

*Pamphilus addresses Nestorianism, which he says would demote the man Jesus from being the incarnate God to being like any saint filled with divine energy and dignity by the Spirit of God. That would then “elevate” the saints to be on the same (demoted) level as the Christ.*

Question IX: Does the name “Christ” indicate essence or energy?

Answer: The name “Christ” is not an indication of essence.

...

Given that those who contend for division split the natures between persons and unite them only in dignity, why do they say Emmanuel is greater than the saints even if they are confessing him as God and worshipping him as the Son of God? Especially if, in truth, all are made worthy of the deifying grace of the Spirit?<sup>153</sup> The bestowal of the divine energy and the gift of dignity have come in a common way to all, even if the divine distribution of the gifts of the Spirit occur in different degrees, as the merit of those empowered or enlightened bids. They have been called gods and sons of God according to the verse, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Why do they not teach two natures for each of the saints and in the same way elevate those who have been worthy of divine dignity to the divine and blessed nature?

[The reply picks up with reference to Athanasius teaching and the Apostles preaching Christ to be God and man, two natures and one person.]

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<sup>153</sup> πάντων καταξιοθέντων τῆς θεοποιῶ τοῦ πνεύματος χάριτος.

**113. Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiarum siue Originum libri XX*, 7.4.6–12, Lindsay, *Etymologiarum*<sup>154</sup>**

*Isidore here endeavors to “define” the names of God, distinguishing the three personal and relational names from the one “essential” name of God. In this context, he also notes how “gods” may refer to saints and angels, but without making them equal to God.*

Truly “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” are relational names (appellative) as “Unbegotten, Begotten, and Proceeding.” Each is relative because they are spoken in reference to each other. For when “God” is spoken, it means the essence because it is said with reference to himself. But when “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” are spoken, they are spoken relative to each other because they reference one another.

For “Father” is not such for himself but this title is spoken relative to the Son because he has a Son. So also, “Son” is spoken relatively, because he has a Father. So, too, the Holy Spirit because he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. For these relational names indicate that they reference one another, not that very substance by which they are one. Hence, the Trinity is indicated in the relative names of the persons. The deity is not tripled but is a singularity, because if [the Deity] were tripled we would be introducing a plurality of gods. But the name of “gods” is spoken as plural in reference to angels and holy human beings given that they are not equal [to God] by merit.<sup>155</sup> About them, the Psalm says, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). On account of the one and equal divinity, the name “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” does not reveal the name of Gods but of God, as the Apostle says, “For us, however, there is one God” (1 Cor. 8:6)—or as the divine voice says, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God” (Deut.

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<sup>154</sup> See also Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuaa-ebooks/detail.action?docID=261103>.

<sup>155</sup> *propter quod non sint merito aequales.*

6:4), that is, as the Trinity is one so also the Lord God is one. Among the Greeks, the faith in the Trinity is expressed in this way: one οὐσία, as if to say one nature or one essence, and three ὑποστάσεις, which means three persons or substances in Latin. For Latin proper does not speak about God except as an essence. It does not speak properly of substance, only improperly. This is indeed so because among the Greeks “substance” is understood as “person,” not “nature.”

**114. Isidore of Seville: *Sententiae* 3.39.4–6, CCSL 3.281–82**

*Isidore explores how children should not judge their fathers and subjects should not (normally) judge their rulers. He begins with how Noah condemned the sons of Ham for exposing his nakedness.*

By this judgment Noah condemns the sons of Ham because they publicly revealed the guilt of his own intentions. So also Ham, who did not cover his father’s disgrace, presented his shame as something to be mocked. Shem and Japheth would acquire merit, for they reverently covered what they knew their fathers had done immoderately (Gen. 9:22–23). They would not love the deeds of their fathers, but still they only covered them; they did not imitate them. For there are those who judge their own intentions amiss, as they give attention to be more intent on earthly desires or perhaps they have thought too little about spiritual things.

Rulers thus are to be judged by God. They are never to be judged by their own subjects. An illustration is found in the Lord who himself with his own whip sent out of the temple those selling doves and turned over the tables of the moneychangers (John 2:14–16). Even as he says thus: “God stood in the assembly of the gods, in the midst he discerns gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). But if a ruler strays from the faith, he will have to be denounced by his subjects. Truly, for

the sake of spurious customs, the common people will have to bear him rather than hinder him.<sup>156</sup>

**115. Scotus Anonymus: *Comm. Epist. Catholicas, Ep. Iacobi, 543–50, CCSL 108B.16***

*This text, like others which depict the common sinfulness of humanity, allows that there are some (“gods”) who may rise above such a state.*

No human being is able to tame [the tongue] (James 3:8). Human being, that is, one who is carnal, as the Lord says in the Gospel: “Whom do human beings say the Son of Man is?” (Matt. 16:13) But regarding the saints it is said, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). And he said rightly “tongue” and does not [need to] add “his own” because no one is able to tame the tongue of another, however they may try. One is hardly able to tame his own. But nevertheless it is said, “Keep your tongue from evil” (Ps. 34:13, LXX 33:14). And about Job it is said, “Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 1:22), that is, in the hour of temptation, although he had been righteous, his tongue might have possibly erred.

**116. Ps.-Hilary of Arles: *Tract. septem Ep. Catholicas, Ep. 2 Petri, 26–39, CCSL 108B.99***

*One of the curiosities about patristic citations of Ps. 82:6 (LXX 81:6) is how infrequently they made in reference to 2 Peter 1:4, the promise that believers may become partakers of the divine nature. This brief seventh-century commentary provides one example.*

(3) [His divine power has granted to us] “all things of his divine virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). All things. This signifies the whole of Scripture and the virtues accomplished by Christ in the flesh and the works of baptism and the rule of preaching. [His divine power has granted to all things which pertain] “to life,” that is, eternal life, “. . . and godliness,” that is, to the kindness of his rewards with life. “. . . Who called us by his own glory,” because “Glory belongs to God alone”

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<sup>156</sup> *pro moribus uero reprobis tolerandus magis quam dstringendus a plebe est.*

because he alone redeemed us. “. . . And virtue,” because he suffered according to his own will.

(4) “By which” [he has granted to us] “the greatest” [promises] (2 Pet. 1:4), that is, things foretold. He granted promises to us, for in the Scriptures rewards were promised. [You may become] “partakers of the divine nature,” that is, that you may be gods as one reads, “I said, you are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). For as God against nature became a participant in human nature, so the human being against his own nature has become a participant of the divine nature.

“Fleeing what is in the world,” that is, concupiscence.

**117. Anonymus: *Glossa Psalmorum* on Psalm 47:9 (LXX 46:10), *Vetus Latina* 1.199, 5**

*A modern translation of Ps. 47:9 (LXX 46:10) reads, “For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!” (ESV). The vulgate reading (also at Ps. 46:10) has a set of strong and highly exalted gods which beg for explanation.*

Ps. 47:9 (LXX 46:10) “Because the strong gods of the earth have been highly exalted.” “Gods” are the saints,<sup>157</sup> as the prophet says, “I said, You are gods and sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). “Highly exalted”—they have been exceedingly exalted, that is, through faith and preaching.<sup>158</sup>

**118. Anonymus: *Glossa Psalmorum* on Psalm 50:1 (LXX 49:1), *Vetus Latina* 1.207, 3–7**

*A classic “problem passage” for the tradition, Ps. 50:1 (LXX 49:1) calls God the “God of gods.” The solution here is also traditional in pointing to Christ among his saints.*

“God of gods has spoken” (Ps. 50:1; LXX 49:1). Elsewhere it says, “God has stood in the assembly of gods” (Ps. 82:1, LXX 81:1). Again, it says, “I said, You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX

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<sup>157</sup> *sancti.*

<sup>158</sup> *per fidem et praedicationem.*

81:6). St. Paul also says, “Even if there are many gods” (1 Cor. 8:5). Elsewhere we find, “Behold, I have set you for a god to Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1). These are the subjects of our inquiry. But he says this “God of gods” as if to say, “The God of all the saints,” namely, Christ.

“The Lord has spoken” on his own and through prophets and through patriarchs. “And he called the earth,” that is, the holy church, “From the rising of the sun to its setting,” that is, from the four corners of the world, from east to west and so on, or from the first age even into old age.

**119. Anonymus: *Glossa Psalmorum* on Psalm 82:1, 6–8 (LXX 81:1, 6–8), *Vetus Latina* 1.370, 1–20; 372, 1–373, 7**

*These notes on Psalm 82 (LXX 81) have it refer to the life of Christ among the Jews and his presence in the church. Its admonition comes to Christians as well.*

A psalm of Asaph, that is, a psalm of the congregation. This psalm should be understood historically in reference to the synagogue and according to its deeper meaning in reference to the church, that is, what is gathered together from Jews and Gentiles.

“God stood in the synagogue of gods.” This question arises: When it says, “he stood,” one must ask about where and when and what person is meant. Since we know there are three perfect and complete Persons, did the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit “stand”? Or is it the one God in his deity as in the middle and others round about? Who is on the periphery and who is in the center? Or what does it mean “he stood”? Is God local? No, because God is everywhere—above and below and entire in every place.

Therefore, because neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit took on flesh, but only the Son, is it Christ who stood? According to Gregory, “To pass away is human, to remain standing is a matter of divinity.”<sup>159</sup> Although he appeared in the flesh through his humanity, in this way, it was

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<sup>159</sup> Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in evangelia* 1.2.6, PL 76:1084.

nevertheless always his to stand in his divinity.

Another interpretation: Christ stood, namely, in the synagogue when he took the book of Isaiah the prophet and read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, etc.” (Luke 4:17) and he said, “Today this prophecy is fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21).<sup>160</sup>

He says “the synagogue of the gods,” that is, of the Jews who were called gods, not by nature but nominally,<sup>161</sup> as it was said to Moses, “I made you for a god to Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1).

“But God discerns in the midst” (Ps. 82:1b, LXX 81:1b), that is, on the Day of Judgment he discerns, namely, the person of the Son clearly distinguishes, as it is said, “All judgment has been given to the Son” (John 5:22). He distinguishes because he divides the evil from the good, the holy from sinners, the just from the impious.

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“I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6), God of God, Light of Light. But they received the name “gods” as derived from God. Adam was called a son of God, that is, not by birth but by creation as it is said, “Adam who was from God” (Luke 3:38). And all the sons of Adam would have remained as gods if he had not sinned, that is, they would have been immortal like angels who are called by this name. And in this way these sons of God were born from the son of God, Adam, which can be understood as a reference to the predestined in the church, who themselves are called sons of God not by nature but nominally,<sup>162</sup> as we find in the Gospel: “As many as received him, he gave power to become sons of God, to those who believed in his name” (John 1:12).

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<sup>160</sup> Actually, the passage indicates that Christ only read from the scroll while standing and commented on it while sitting.

<sup>161</sup> or “by designation”; *non natura sed nuncupative*.

<sup>162</sup> *nuncupative*.

“But you will die as human beings” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). We believe that this is especially said to those who were addressed above, “How long do you judge iniquity?” That is, as your father Adam became mortal, so you will, too. In general this pertains to everyone, but especially to those who pervert and twist judicial cases, as if it says, “You too will die just as those sinners.”

“And you will fall as one of the rulers” (Ps. 82:7, LXX 81:7). Like the devil who was the prince of angels, just as it says, “every precious stone was your covering, etc.” (Ezek. 28:13). He fell on account of pride just as you do. If it should indicate that angels should be called princes, Zechariah attests when he says, “And an angel speaks to an angel, ‘Hurry and speak to the young man’” (Zech. 2:4).<sup>163</sup> And so Daniel, too. [This “falling as one of the rulers” has to do with] you too, that is, each one who does not correct his life will fall into everlasting punishment in the coming judgment.

Another meaning of “you will fall as one of the princes”: that is, like Judas who was a leader among those who had had received Jesus and who fell. You will do likewise. Or one might add that he was a called a prince on account of the rank<sup>164</sup> of the apostles from which he fell.

8. “Arise, O God, to judge the earth.” As one the gathered church says to Christ: Arise from the dead. You were judged by the earth, that is, by sinners and by the wicked. Arise to judge the earth. That person who was judged, he judges others on the Day of Judgment.

“Because you will inherit among all the Gentiles,” as if he says: It did not hinder you nor was it beneath you, although the Jews did not want it for you, because all came to you as an

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<sup>163</sup> The passage from Zechariah indicates a hierarchy of authority among angels in that one angel gives an order to another. Presumably there is a passage in Daniel (or its additions) to the same effect.

<sup>164</sup> *principatus*.

inheritance, just as the prophet says, “I will give you the nations for an inheritance” (Ps. 2:8). And “you will inherit among all,” that is, among the predestined.

**120. Anonymus: *Glossa Psalmorum* on Psalm 83:1 (LXX 82:2), *Vetus Latina* 1.373, 1–3**

*Attention to the future tense of the verb makes this passage eschatological, a reference to the coming judgment, when God alone judges.*

(Ps. 83, LXX 82:)2. “God, who will be like you?”<sup>165</sup> He did not say “was” or “is” but “will be,” because it concerns the future. The prophet’s message was looking ahead to judgment.

“Who will be like you?” he asks. None of the human beings about whom we spoke above: “You are gods” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). Nor any of the angels, about whom he says elsewhere, “Who among the sons of God will be like God?” (Ps. 89:6, LXX 88:7). No one will be like you, neither among the angels nor among human beings, when judgment must be determined.

**121. Anonymus: *Glossa Psalmorum* on Psalm 95:3 (LXX 94:3), *Vetus Latina* 1.434, 1–7**

*God’s unique greatness is manifest, however many others might be called “gods.”*

(Ps. 95, LXX 94:)3: “Because the Lord is a great God.” Why do we praise him? Because he is great. Is he great merit or grace as we are? No, but by nature.

“And a great king above all gods.” St. Paul said, “As there are many gods and many lords” (1 Cor. 8:5), and so they are called gods not by nature but by grace, as we say about the demons, as it is said in the psalm, “All the gods of the nations are demons” (Ps. 96:5, LXX 95:5). Is this God’s greatness, to be over demons? No, but “above all gods.” He is speaking about the same ones as when he said: “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6).

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<sup>165</sup> This question, found at Ps. 83:1 (LXX 82:2) in the *Psalterium Romanum*, is in the Hebrew text only at Ps. 35:10 (LXX 34:10) and 71:19 (LXX 70:19).

**122. Anonymus: *Glossa Psalmorum* on Psalm 136:2 (LXX 135:2), *Vetus Latina* 2.174, 1–5**

*Again, though many may be called “gods,” only one is worthy of praise.*

(Ps. 136, LXX 135:)2 “Praise the God of gods.” Many are called gods, such as the idols of the Gentiles, as Paul says, “If indeed there are many gods and many lords, but for us there is one Lord” (1 Cor. 8:5). It is also said to Moses, “I have made you as a god for Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1). And the saints are called gods, as the prophet says, “I said, You are gods and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). But you, the prophet says, praise him who is God above all.

**123. Ps.-Marcellus: *Ep. 2 ad Maxentius*, PL 7:1098A–B**

*This medieval document, written as if from the Pope Marcellus to the Emperor Maxentius (in the early fourth century), addresses the medieval ecclesiastical concern to have church leaders free from the jurisdiction of civil courts. It identifies the clergy as “gods” who stand above civil law.*

Hence, the prophet says: “You should not judge anyone before you recognize him.”<sup>166</sup> Therefore because bishops and the remaining servants of God suffer persecution, it is not they suffering so much as he in whose place they function as it is written: “He who touches you touches the apple of my eye” (Zach. 2 :8b). And we find in another place: He who has grieved you has grieved me (cf., 2 Cor. 2:5). And “he who does wrong will receive back that which he has done unjustly” (Col. 3:25). Thus, it is granted to you to be able to kill our bodies, yet you will not be able to kill our souls (Matt. 10:28). Nor will you be able to remove us from the divine heights we have attained. Therefore, although you are able to assemble some bishops, you will not be able to make a synod legitimate apart from the episcopal authority of this holy seat, nor to

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<sup>166</sup> The text appears to reflect the Old Latin. Ecclesiasticus 11:7 in the Vulgate reads: *Priusquam interroges, ne vituperes quemquam.*

damn any bishop who has appealed to this apostolic seat, before a final sentence comes forth from here.

For if secular rulers employ appeals in public cases, how much more may priests do this same thing, since they are above them? About them, it is said, “I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6, LXX 81:6). For that reason, no bishop accused in any criminal matter may be heard or judged, except in a legitimate synod, at its proper time, called by apostolic or appropriate authority. Otherwise, the innocent may be condemned or may fall out of the fellowship.

## APPENDIX TWO:

### Septuagint and English Psalm References

The following table is designed to assist the reader in negotiating the system of psalm references between the Septuagint and English versions, the English reflecting the numbering of the Masoretic Text. The Latin Vulgate follows the Septuagintal system. This list represents the full collection of psalm passages which the Fathers reference in connection with Ps. 82:6 (LXX Ps. 81:6). The significant phrase of the citation (or at least enough to perhaps remind the reader of the context) is also included. At times, the English translation differs considerably from the Greek or the Latin and these instances are noted in the footnotes.

Table 1. Septuagint and English Psalm References

<u>LXX</u> <u>reference</u>	<u>English</u> <u>reference</u>	<u>Text</u>
Ps. 1:1	Ps. 1:1	Blessed is the human who does not walk in the counsel. . .
Ps. 1:2–3	Ps. 1:2–3	He meditates on the law of the Lord, like a tree planted
Ps. 2:2	Ps. 2:2	Princes gathered together against Christ
Ps. 2:7	Ps. 2:7	Today I have begotten you
Ps. 2:8	Ps. 2:8	I will give you the nations as your inheritance
Ps. 4:3	Ps. 4:2	The sons of humans dull of heart, love vanity, seek the lie
Ps. 4:4	Ps. 4:3	The Lord made his holy one marvelous
Ps. 5:7	Ps. 5:6	You will destroy all liars
Ps. 7:12	Ps. 7:11 <sup>1</sup>	God does not bring on wrath every day
Ps. 8:6	Ps. 8:5	You made the human a little lower than the angels
Ps. 9:20	Ps. 9:19	Let not man prevail
Ps. 11:2–3	Ps. 12:1–2 <sup>2</sup>	Each speaks lies to his neighbor, truth has disappeared
<u>LXX</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Text</u>
Ps. 11:9	Ps. 12:8 <sup>3</sup>	In your eminence you have esteemed the sons of men
Ps. 13:1a	Ps. 14:1a	The fool says in his heart, there is no God

<sup>1</sup> The LXX negates the sense of the English, “God who feels indignation every day” (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> The LXX has “truths have diminished”; the English reads, “the faithful have vanished” (ESV).

<sup>3</sup> The LXX has “In your eminence You have esteemed the sons of men”; the English reads, “Vileness is exalted among the children of man” (ESV).

Ps. 13:1b–c	Ps. 14:1b–c	None does good, all turned aside
Ps. 14:4	Ps. 15:4	He glorifies those who fear the Lord
Ps. 15:2	Ps. 16:2 <sup>4</sup>	You are my Lord, not needing anything from me
Ps. 18:2	Ps. 19:1	The firmament declares his handiwork
Ps. 21:23	Ps. 22:22	I will declare your name to my brothers (Heb. 2:12)
Ps. 28:1	Ps. 29:1 <sup>5</sup>	Bring to the Lord, sons of God
Ps. 30:20	Ps. 31:19	Those who hope in you in the presence of human beings
Ps. 31:9	Ps. 32:9	Do not be like horse or mule
Ps. 32:13	Ps. 33:13	The Lord beheld all the sons of human beings
Ps. 33:14	Ps. 34:13	Keep your tongue from evil
Ps. 34:10	Ps. 35:10	O Lord, who is like you?
Ps. 35:7	Ps. 36:6	You will save human and beast, O Lord
Ps. 44:2	Ps. 45:1 <sup>6</sup>	My heart has belched a good word
Ps. 44:8	Ps. 45:7	God anointed you with oil beyond companions
Ps. 44:10	Ps. 45:9	The queen stands at your right in a golden robe
Ps. 46:3	Ps. 47:2	The Lord Most High is awesome, king above all
Ps. 46:10	Ps. 47:9 <sup>7</sup>	The gods of the earth have been highly exalted
Ps. 48:21	Ps. 49:20	A man is like a beast
Ps. 49:1	Ps. 50:1	The Lord of gods summons the earth
Ps. 49:4	Ps. 50:4	He calls heaven and earth to judge his people
Ps. 55:2	Ps. 56:2 <sup>8</sup>	A human has trampled on me
Ps. 61:10	Ps. 62:9 <sup>9</sup>	The sons of human beings are vain, liars
Ps. 67:2	Ps. 68:1	Let God arise
Ps. 71:3	Ps. 72:3	Let the mountains receive peace and the hills justice
Ps. 76:14	Ps. 77:13	Who is a great God as our God?
Ps. 80:12–15	Ps. 81:11–14	My people did not hear my voice...
Ps. 81:1–8	Ps. 82:1–8	God stood in the synagogue of gods . . .
<u>LXX</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Text</u>
Ps. 82:2	Ps. 83:1 <sup>10</sup>	Who will be like you?
Ps. 83:8	Ps. 84:7 <sup>11</sup>	The God of gods will appear in Zion

<sup>4</sup> The LXX has “Not needing anything from me”; the English reads, “I have no good apart from you” (ESV).

<sup>5</sup> The LXX has “Offer to the Lord”; the English reads, “Ascribe to the Lord” (ESV).

<sup>6</sup> The LXX has, “My heart has belched a good word”; the English reads, “My heart overflows with a pleasing theme” (ESV).

<sup>7</sup> A Latin textual variant as reflected in the Clementine text has, “The gods of the earth have been highly exalted”; the LXX has, “The mighty ones of God have been highly exalted”; the English reads, “The shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!” (ESV).

<sup>8</sup> The LXX has, “Man has trampled on me”; the English reads, “My enemies trample on me” (ESV).

<sup>9</sup> The LXX has, “The sons of humans are vain, liars. . .”; the English reads, “Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are delusion” (ESV).

<sup>10</sup> The LXX has, “Who will be like you?” which is absent in the English.

<sup>11</sup> The LXX has, “The God of gods will appear in Zion”; the English reads, “Each one appears before God in

Ps. 84:8	Ps. 85:7	Show us, Lord, mercy and grant us salvation
Ps. 85:8	Ps. 86:8	No one like you among the gods
Ps. 88:7	Ps. 89:6	Who in the clouds will be equal to God?
Ps. 88:20	Ps. 89:19 <sup>12</sup>	You spoke to your holy ones in a vision
Ps. 88:27–28	Ps. 89:26–27	He shall call upon me, “You are my Father” . . .
Ps. 88:49	Ps. 89:48	Who is the man who will not see death?
Ps. 89:16	Ps. 90:16 <sup>13</sup>	Direct the children of men
Ps. 91:16	Ps. 92:15	The Lord is upright, there is no injustice in him
Ps. 93:11	Ps. 94:11	The thoughts of man are vain
Ps. 93:12	Ps. 94:12	Blessed is the man whom you teach, Lord
Ps. 94:3	Ps. 95:3	God is a great king over all gods
Ps. 94:8	Ps. 95:8	Do not harden your hearts
Ps. 95:4	Ps. 96:4	The Lord is to be feared above all gods
Ps. 95:5	Ps. 96:5 <sup>14</sup>	The gods of nations are demons
Ps. 96:7	Ps. 97:7 <sup>15</sup>	Adore him, all you his angels
Ps. 96:9	Ps. 97:9	You are glorified exceedingly, more than all gods
Ps. 101:26–27	Ps. 102:25–26	Heavens shall perish but you endure forever
Ps. 102:5	Ps. 103:5	He fulfills your desire with good things
Ps. 104:15	Ps. 105:15	Do not touch my christs; do not harm my prophets
Ps. 106:20	Ps. 107:20	He sent his Word and healed them
Ps. 109:3	Ps. 110:3 <sup>16</sup>	I have begotten you from the womb
Ps. 113:12–16	Ps. 115:4–8	(Idols) have mouths and do not speak . . .
Ps. 115:2	Ps. 116:11	Every man is a liar
Ps. 115:4	Ps. 116:13	I will take the cup of salvation
Ps. 118:18	Ps. 119:18	I will apprehend your wonders from you law
Ps. 134:5	Ps. 135:5	God above all gods
Ps. 134:15–16	Ps. 135:15–16	Idols are silver and gold, works of human hands
Ps. 135:2	Ps. 136:2	Praise the God of gods
Ps. 144:9	Ps. 145:9	Kind is the Lord to all things altogether
Ps. 144:16	Ps. 145:16	You open your hand and satisfy everything . . .
Ps. 145:3	Ps. 146:3	The sons of men in whom is no salvation
Ps. 146:9	Ps. 147:9	Young ravens cry out to God

Zion” (ESV).

<sup>12</sup> Gennadius I has “You spoke to your sons in a vision,” which reflects a minority manuscript tradition for the LXX, which usually reads, “You spoke to your holy ones in a vision”; the English reads, “You spoke in a vision to your godly one” (ESV).

<sup>13</sup> The LXX has, “Guide their sons”; the English reads, “(Let) your glorious power (be shown) to their children” (ESV).

<sup>14</sup> The LXX has, “All the gods of the nations are demons”; the English reads, “All the gods of the peoples are worthless idols” (ESV).

<sup>15</sup> The LXX has, “Adore him, all you his angels”; the English reads, “Worship him, all you gods!” (ESV).

<sup>16</sup> The LXX has, “I have begotten you from the womb before the Morning Star”; the English reads, “from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.”

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