

# Exegetical traditions in ancient philosophy, Judaism and Christianity : their origins and cultural background

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## Exegetical traditions in ancient philosophy, Judaism and Christianity. Their origins and cultural background

In the present issue of the *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, we have published the first set of papers that emerged from the research project “Exegetical traditions in ancient philosophy, Judaism and Christianity: their origins and cultural background”. The project, which gathered researchers specialized in classical philology, ancient philosophy and patrology, was sponsored by the Lithuanian-Swiss cooperation programme “Research and Development”. It was carried out between December 2015 and September 2016 at the University of Fribourg and the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences in Vilnius. A series of workshops held in Fribourg resulted in a final conference which took place on September 2–3, 2016 in Vilnius. A second set of papers from the same conference will follow in the next issue of this journal.

The project aimed at investigating different exegetical traditions in Greek philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity with a special focus on their methods and cultural contexts. The ways in which Greek, Jewish, and Christian philosophical and scriptural exegesis developed were diverse from the outset, in topics, methods, scope, and even languages. But they also increasingly interacted with each other. The papers collected in this volume examine both the specificity of the topics and methods of exegesis in these different areas and the interchanges that took place between them.

Jacqueline Tusi goes back as far as Plato’s and Aristotle’s way of interpreting the writings of Zeno of Elea. Her paper shows how different the use of Zeno’s writings was with his two most prominent ancient interpreters, in the choice of topic, the method of presentation and the evaluation. Tatjana Aleknienė’s paper focuses on the way Philo of Alexandria exploits Plato’s *Phaedo* to develop the notion of the “death of the soul” in his commentaries on the Mosaic scriptures. Philo, the most prolific commentator as regards allegorical exegesis before Origen, is the starting point for Nicolas D’Andrès’s study on the exegetical method of Proclus in his own commentaries on Plato’s dialogues. While there is a striking similarity in the allegorical interpretation of the characters from the books of Moses and Plato’s dialogues, a closer analysis reveals how different Proclus’ approach was compared with Philo’s. Origen, the most influential Christian heir and virtuoso of the allegorical exegesis, is a case in point of Lenka Karfíková’s paper on the exegesis of the *Song of Solomon* 1:8 (Vulgate 1:7).

Her paper first discloses the change of meaning of the biblical text translated from Hebrew to Greek and Latin before concentrating on the transformations of its allegorical exegesis between Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairvaux. Although the case of the *Song of Songs* reveals to what extent the translation from Hebrew to Greek and Latin was already an exegesis of its own, Gregor Emmenegger makes a further point in his paper on the extant translations of the Bible into Coptic. The *Codex Schøyen*, that dates as far back as the first half of the fourth century AD, gives a surprising insight into the way the Coptic translators dealt with the text of the gospels in rendering it *ad sensum* rather than *ad verbum*. The early Coptic translations seem to reflect a stage in which the text of the gospels was still in the making, as if the version was of the message itself rather than of its idiom.