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State of the Art and New Perspectives

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Preface

The year 2017 marks the centenary of the publication of the first critical edition of the writings of Methodius of Olympus. In 1917 Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch, at that time professor at the University of Göttingen, edited all the extant writings and fragments of Methodius on behalf of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin and published it in the renowned series *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (GCS 27, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1917). In his edition, Bonwetsch decided to fill the gaps between the extant Greek fragments with a German translation of the medieval Slavonic version of the Corpus Methodianum. Notwithstanding this uncommon procedure, and considering the means available to him at the time, his work provided patristic research with a solid textual basis for the next 100 years.

The 100th anniversary of Bonwetsch's critical edition provided an apt opportunity both to take stock and determine the current state of research on Methodius of Olympus, as well as to point out new perspectives and avenues for future research. For this purpose an international and interdisciplinary conference took place at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena from 19–22 February, 2015. The contributions delivered at the conference are presented to the interested public in this volume.

I express my gratitude to the editor of the series *Texte und Untersuchungen*, Christoph Marksches, for accepting this volume for the series. Surely *Texte und Untersuchungen*, which for many years served as the archive of the series *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte* (GCS), must be regarded as the most appropriate place for publication. I also express special thanks to my research assistant Florian Durner who diligently prepared the manuscript for printing, to Dawn LaValle Norman (Magdalen College, Oxford) who did the language revision of the English essays by non-native speakers, to the student assistants Karoline Wolfram and Florian Klein for reliable legwork, and to the staff of the German office of the publishing house De Gruyter for the most competent and friendly assistance in preparing the manuscript for print.

I also acknowledge, with appreciation and gratitude, the generous support of the conference and the conference volume by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, Cologne. Finally, I would like to thank everybody who took part in the conference, contributed to its success, and made this book possible.

Jena, 25th August 2017

Katharina Bracht

Abbreviations

Abbreviations correspond to those listed in *The SBL Handbook of Style. For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, ed. Patrick H. Alexander et al. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, and Siegfried M. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 2014 (IATG³).

Writings of Methodius of Olympus are abbreviated as follows:

<i>arbitr.</i>	De autexusio/De libero arbitrio
<i>aut.</i>	De autexusio/De libero arbitrio
<i>cib.</i>	De cibis
<i>creat.</i>	De creatis
<i>lepr.</i>	De lepra
<i>res.</i>	De resurrectione
<i>sang.</i>	De sanguisuga
<i>symp.</i>	Symposium
<i>vit.</i>	De vita

Writings of other Greek Christian authors are abbreviated according to *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961 (PGL), writings of Greek pagan authors according to *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott. A New Edition Revised and Augmented throughout by Henry Stuart Jones with the Assistance of Roderick McKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958 (LSJ).

Writings of Latin authors are abbreviated according to *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010 (OLD) and *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmut Schneider. Stuttgart: Metzler 1996–2003 (DNP).

Katharina Bracht

Methodius of Olympus: State of the Art and New Perspectives

Introduction

1 Preliminary Remarks

Methodius of Olympus (in Orthodox Tradition: Methodius of Patara) is regarded within current Patristic research as an author who stands at the centre of Christian theology of the third century.¹ He probably lived and worked as a bishop of the Lycian village of Olympus² during the second half of the third century, and likely died in A.D. 311 or 312 (Hier. *vir. ill.* 83). His writings are an important source for the theology and piety of Asia Minor Christianity during the 40 years of peace before the last great persecution of Christians³ – a time when asceticism increasingly gained importance as a substitute for martyrdom and the ecclesiastical organizational structures matured and were strengthened. Methodius, with the exception of Eusebius of Caesarea, is the only author of the Eastern Church during this time whose writings have been preserved.

Methodius stands in intense reception and critical examination of the theological and philosophical trends of his time. He absorbs concepts from Irenaeus of Lyon, Clement of Alexandria, and other Christian writers and positions himself in relationship to Platonism and Stoicism in their contemporary forms, allowing him to take a differentiated view of contemporary Christian expressions of faith: on the one hand, he rejects the encratic currents within contemporary Christianity while on the other hand issues a strong plea for chastity. He was also recognized, as early as the fourth century, as the first critic of Origen.⁴ His writings were cited or used

1 Benedetta Zorzi, “Metodio d’Olimpo, un autore ‘minore’?,” *REAug* 52 (2006): 31–56. – In Methodius research, the name form used varies according to the academic discipline (patristics: Latin *Methodius*; classics and Slavic philology: Greek *Methodios*). In this volume, the name form (*Methodius* or *Methodios*) is not standardized but consciously used according to the academic field of the essay’s author. – I express my gratitude to Jacob Cerone who translated this introduction into English.

2 Katharina Bracht, *Vollkommenheit und Vollendung. Zur Anthropologie des Methodius von Olympus*, STAC 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 359–74; eadem, “The Question of the Episcopal See of Methodius of Olympus Reconsidered,” *StPatr* 34 (2001): 3–10.

3 For an overview of the works, see Katharina Bracht, Art. “Methodius von Olympus,” *RAC* 24 (2011): 768–84, specifically 769–74.

4 Epiph. *haer.* 64.11.4; 64.63.2f. (A.D. 374–377).

by numerous ancient church writers such as Eusebius of Caesarea,⁵ the *Adamantius Dialogue on the True Faith in God* (*De recta in deum fide*),⁶ Gregory of Nyssa,⁷ Epiphanius of Salamis,⁸ Procopius of Gaza,⁹ among others.¹⁰ Through paraphrases and translations into Armenian (5th century: Eznik of Kolb)¹¹ and Old Slavonic (in the middle of the 10th century, handed down in manuscripts of the 16th century/Russian recension),¹² his writings were received far beyond the Greek cultural space, from Late Antiquity to the early modern times. The high esteem for this Church Father continues in Orthodox churches to this day.¹³ Centering on this church author and his current perception in the sciences, an interdisciplinary and international conference entitled “Methodius of Olympus: State of the Art and New Perspectives” (*Methodius von Olympus: Forschungsstand und -perspektiven*) took place from February 19th–22nd 2015 at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. The contributions of the conference participants will now be made available to the interested public through the present volume.

5 Eus. *praep. ev.* 7.22 quotes Meth. *aut.* 5–12 (GCS 27:157.5–178.9), but under the name of Maximus; cf. Eus. *h.e.* 5.27.

6 For references, see Gottlieb Nathanel Bonwetsch, “Einleitung,” in *Methodius von Olympus. Werke*, GCS 27, (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1917): ix–xlii, specifically ix as well as the critical apparatus *passim*.

7 See Bonwetsch, “Einleitung,” x as well as the critical apparatus *passim*; Thomas J. Dennis, “Gregory on the Resurrection of the Body,” in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, eds. Andreas Spira and Christoph Klock (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981): 55–80; Lloyd George Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom and Life in Christ* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 186–96.

8 Epiph. *haer.* 64.12.1–62.14; see Bonwetsch, “Einleitung,” xf. as well as the critical apparatus *passim*.

9 See Bonwetsch, “Einleitung,” xii as well as the critical apparatus *passim*.

10 See Bonwetsch, “Einleitung,” ix–xvii; Bracht, Art. “Methodius von Olympus,” 768–84, specifically 782.

11 *Eznik de Kolb, De Deo*. Édition critique du texte arménien, traduction française, notes et tables par Louis Mariès et Charles Mercier, PO 28.4 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1959).

12 *Le De autexusio de Méthode d'Olympe: Version slave et texte grec édités et traduits en français*, ed. André Vaillant, PO 22.5 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1930), 718 f. For a German translation of the Old Slavonic corpus of Methodius, see *Methodius von Olympus. Schriften*, ed. Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch (Erlangen/Leipzig: Deichert, 1891). Up until this point, only *De autexusio* exists as a critical edition of the Old Slavonic translation.

13 Katharina Bracht, “Your Memory, which Brings us the Way of Salvation, o Hierarch Methodius.’ The Martyrdom of Methodius of Olympus/Patara and Orthodox Identity,” in *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, ed. Johan Leemans (Leuven: Peeters, 2005): 419–35; eadem, “Zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Methodius von Olympus bzw. Patara in der Tradition der orthodoxen Kirchen,” *StPatr* 42 (2006): 57–63.

2 State of the Art

2.1 Text Editions

Methodius of Olympus has been known in patristic research since the publication of the first edition of his Greek writings or fragments by Johannes Meursius (1619), François Combéfis (1644), Leo Allatius (1656), and Petrus Possinus (1657).¹⁴ About 100 years ago, the first complete critical edition by Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch appeared in the series *Die griechischen christliche Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (1917).¹⁵ However, from the very beginning it was clear that Bonwetsch's edition would need to be expanded or revised. For on the one hand, Bonwetsch fills the gaps present in the Greek text – which is only handed down in fragments – by using the almost completely persevered Old Slavonic translation, yet not offering a critical edition, but only a German translation of the same, which is based on a small amount of manuscripts. Since then, a critical edition of the Old Slavonic translation – which should not be regarded solely as a “gap filler” but should be appreciated as a work of the 10th century that itself has a subsequent history of tradition of philological and historical interest – is an urgent *desideratum* that has, up until now, only been fulfilled with regard to the writing *De autexusio* by André Vaillant (1930).¹⁶ On the other hand, in the 1950s the *Kommission für spätantike Religionsgeschichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften* had plans to issue a new edition, a goal toward which Vinzenz Buchheit published extensive Greek philological preparatory work in 1958 in the series *Texte und Untersuchungen*.¹⁷ However, the plan did not come to fruition; instead, only the *Symposium* was published as a single writing in 1963 within the

¹⁴ *Variorum divinatorum liber unus*, ed. Johannes Meursius (Leiden 1619), 89–110; *SS. patrum Amphiloicii Iconiensis, Methodii Patarensis et Andreae Cretensis opera omnia*, ed. François Combéfis (Paris 1644), 283–474; *Bibliothecae Graecorum patrum auctarium novissimum*, ed. François Combéfis (Paris 1672); *S. P. N. Methodii episcopi et martyris convivium decem virginum*, ed. Leo Allatius (Rom 1656); *S. P. N. Methodii episcopi et martyris convivium decem virginum*, ed. Petrus Possinus (Paris 1657). In the 19th century, the complete editions of the then known Greek Methodius texts followed: *S. P. N. Methodii episcopi et martyris opera omnia*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PG 18 (Paris 1857), and *S. Methodii Opera Omnia et S. Methodius Platonizans*, Part I: *S. P. N. Methodii episcopi et martyris opera omnia quae quidem integra supersunt ac deperditorum reliquiae*, ed. Albert Jahn (Halle: Pfeffer, 1865). The first author who drew attention to the existence of the Old Slavonic translation was Johannes Baptista Pitra, *Analecta sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi parata*, Vol. 3 et 4: *Patres Antenicani* (Paris: Jouby et Roger, 1883), in connection with the publication of further fragments.

¹⁵ *Methodius von Olympus. Werke*, ed. Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch, GCS 27 (Leipzig/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1917/repr. 2012).

¹⁶ Vaillant, *Le De autexusio*. All authors and translators who read the Old Slavonic text of other Methodius writings work in the absence of a critical edition and must use individual manuscripts. The critical edition of the Old Slavonic version of *De lepra* is being prepared by Anna Jouravel.

¹⁷ Vinzenz Buchheit, *Studien zu Methodios von Olympos*, TU 69 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958).

series *Sources Chrétiennes*. This volume contains the entire handed-down Greek text of the *Symposium* presented in a new critical edition by Herbert Musurillo, with an accompanying French translation by Victor-Henry Debidour.¹⁸

2.2 Secondary Literature

Only 20 years ago, Methodius was considered to be largely uncharted territory on the map of church history. Although he was singled out in the middle of the 17th century, he was researched more often in the second half of the 19th century, and again in the second half of the 20th century after the appearance of the textual editions of Bonwetsch (1917), Vaillant (1930), and Musurillo (1963).¹⁹ Most of this interest, however, has focused on secondary matters such as Platonism, Origen, or ascetic research.²⁰

It was only in 1997 that Methodius began to be intensely investigated as an independent thinker in theological, philological, and historical research. More monographs and translations of his works as well as numerous essays have appeared, which have given rise to a contoured picture of this early Christian theologian. These research contributions have shown that Methodius was heretofore wrongly regarded as an “*autore minore*” (insignificant author)²¹ and as “learned, but not original.”²² They have also raised his importance as a Christian author of Late Antiquity in the research consciousness:

- i. On the one hand, *Methodius’ theology* was illuminated under different aspects and focal points: Lloyd George Patterson, in his monograph published in 1997, offers a complete presentation of Methodius’ work under the slogans “Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ.”²³ Two years later, my dissertation on the anthropology of Methodius under the title “Vollkommenheit und Vollendung” appeared.²⁴ In 2011, Mirosław Mejzner’s monograph on the eschatology

18 *Méthode d’Olympe. Le banquet*, ed. Herbert Musurillo and trans. Victor-Henry Debidour, SC 95 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963). Musurillo had already published an English translation of the *Symposium* a few years earlier: *St. Methodius. The Symposium: A Treatise on Chastity*, trans. Herbert Musurillo, ACW 27 (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1958).

19 See the bibliography up till 1999 by Bracht, *Vollkommenheit*, 399–411.

20 See Bracht, *Vollkommenheit*, 2f.

21 Zorzi, “Metodio d’Olimpo, un autore ‘minore’?”, 31–56.

22 Hendrik Simon Benjamins, “Methodius von Olympus, ‘Über die Auferstehung’: Gegen Origenes und gegen Porphyrius?,” in *Origeniana septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Wolfgang Artur Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg, EThL 137 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999): 91–8, specifically 91: „Methodius ist gelehrt, aber nicht originell“.

23 Lloyd George Patterson, *Divine Sovereignty*.

24 Bracht, *Vollkommenheit*.

of Methodius of Olympus was published.²⁵ Last year, in 2016 Federica Candido presented her dissertation, in which she showed that Methodius' *Symposium* describes a new concept of virginity (i.e. the concept of παρθένος διδάσκαλος).²⁶ A specific aspect of Methodius' theology is his networking and discussion with previous authors. Accordingly, Nikolai Kiel brought into view Methodius' reception of Ps-Athenagoras' writing *De resurrectione*.²⁷ Finally, detailed observations on individual writings of Methodius were published in scientific essays, in particular on the writings *Symposium*,²⁸ *De autexusio*,²⁹ and *De resurrectione*.³⁰

25 Mirosław Mejzner, *L'escatologia di Metodio di Olimpo*, SEAug 124 (Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011); cf. idem, "The Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Resurrection according to Methodius of Olympus," *StPatr* 65 (2013): 185–96. See also the earlier essay by Mejzner's doctoral advisor Emanuela Prinziavalli, "Il millenarismo in Oriente da Metodio ad Apollinare," *ASE* 15 (1998): 125–51.

26 Federica Candido, *Sulle tracce della presenza femminile nelle comunità cristiane di Asia Minore prima della nascita del monachesimo (II–IV secolo): genesi e fortuna del Symposium metodiano* (Thèse de doctorat: Univ. Genève, 2016), see online: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:86033> (retrieved 05–02–2017). Candido interprets the *Symposium* as a historical source for the fact that in the second half of the 3rd century, Christian women who had taken the vows of virginity did not lead a withdrawn life but actively participated in community life by providing their knowledge and skills to the field of education and catechesis.

27 Nikolai Kiel, *Ps-Athenagoras De Resurrectione. Datierung und Kontextualisierung der dem Apologeten Athenagoras zugeschriebenen Auferstehungsschrift*, VC.Sup 133 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 707–27.

28 These contributions approach the *Symposium* from a variety of perspectives, whether it be philosophical, theological, or literary history or interest in ancient astrology or gender research. Since the respective questions arise from the essay title, they are listed here in the order of publication: Benedetta Selene Zorzi, "La reinterpretazione dell'eros platonico nel Simposio di Metodio d'Olimpo," *Adamantius* 9 (2003): 102–27; Cristóbal Macías and Marta González, "El Banquete de Metodio de Olimpo y sus argumentos contra la astrología," *MHNH* 5 (2005): 307–41; Alexander Bril, "Plato and the Symptotic Form of the Symposium of St. Methodius of Olympus," *ZAC* 9 (2006): 279–302; Ralph Norman, "Methodius and Methodologies: Ways of Reading Third-Century Christian Sexual Symbolism," *Theology and Sexuality* 13 (2006): 79–100; Gvantsa Koplatadze, "Phenomenon of Love in *Symposium* by Plato and *Symposium* by Methodius of Patara," *Phasis* 14 (2011): 296–313. Particularly noteworthy is the essay by Selene M. Benedetta Zorzi, "The Use of the Terms ἀγνεία, παρθενία, σωφροσύνη, and ἐγκράτεια in the *Symposium* of Methodius of Olympus," *VC* 63 (2009): 138–68, which defines the word field "purity/virginity" in the *Symposium* and thereby significantly contributes to our understanding of this writing.

29 Roberta Franchi, "Il mare in tempesta nel 'De autexusio' di Metodio di Olimpo e nell' 'Hexameron' di Giorgio di Pisidia," *ByZ* 102 (2009): 65–82.

30 Benjamins, "Methodius von Olympus, 'Über die Auferstehung'", 91–8; Mejzner, "The Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Resurrection," 185–97.

- ii. On the other hand, Methodius was also used as a *source for overarching questions* by authors such as Ekkehard Mühlenberg³¹ and Amy Brown Hughes³² who wrote on the thematic field of asceticism and virginity. Even the interest in Methodius as a critic of Origen was perused further as the essays by Emanuela Prinzivalli,³³ Jon F. Dechow³⁴ und Vladimir Cvetkovic³⁵ show. Averil Cameron was particularly interested in the genre of early Christian dialogue, of which Methodius' writings offer outstanding examples in the Greek Christian literature of Late Antiquity.³⁶ Toward the intellectual social milieu of the late third century, Elizabeth DePalma Digeser investigated the causes of the Diocletian persecution of Christians in her monograph. She researched the conflict between Porphyry of Tyre and Methodius as a manifestation of the socio-intellectual constellation, from which she explained the eruption of the last great widespread persecution of Christians.³⁷
- iii. A third thematic area that is often covered *en passant* but has received little specialized attention since the 1985 study of Emanuela Prinzivalli³⁸ is *Methodius' Reception of the Bible*. Since then, the only works to surface on this theme have been Dmitrij Bumazhnov's examination of Methodius' reception of the bib-

31 Ekkehard Mühlenberg, *Altchristliche Lebensführung zwischen Bibel und Tugendlehre: Ethik bei den griechischen Philosophen und den frühen Christen*, AAWG.PH 272 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 101–20.

32 Amy Brown Hughes, “*Chastely I live for thee*”: *Virginity as Bondage and Freedom in Origen of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus, and Gregory of Nyssa* (Wheaton, Ill.: type-written dissertation, 2013); eadem, “The Legacy of the Feminine in the Christology of Origen of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus, and Gregory of Nyssa,” *VC* 70 (2016): 51–76.

33 Emanuela Prinzivalli, “The Controversy about Origen before Epiphanius,” in *Origeniana septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Wolfgang A. Bienert and Uwe Kuhneweg, *EThL* 137 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999): 195–213, specifically 208–11.

34 Jon F. Dechow, “From Methodius to Epiphanius in Anti-Origenist Polemic,” *Adamantius* 19 (2013): 10–29.

35 Vladimir Cvetkovic, “From Adamantius to Centaur: St Methodius of Olympus' Critique of Origen,” in *Origeniana Decima: Origen as Writer*, Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress (Kraków, Poland, 31 August–4 September 2009), eds. Sylwia Kaczmarek and Henryk Pietras, *BETL* 244 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011): 791–802.

36 Averil Cameron, “Can Christians do Dialogue?,” *StPatr* 63 (2013): 103–21; eadem, *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity*, *Hellenic Studies* 65 (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2014), 39–54 (German translation: *Dialog und Debatte in der Spätantike*, *Spielräume der Antike* 3 [Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 2014], 71–80).

37 Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, “Methodius and Porphyry,” *StPatr* 46 (2010): 21–6; eadem, “Schism in the Ammonian community: Porphyry v. Methodius of Olympus,” in *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution*, ed. Averil Cameron (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2012): 128–63. According to tradition, Methodius died as a martyr in this persecution; see Jerome, *vir. ill.* 83.

38 Emanuela Prinzivalli, *L'esegesi biblica di Metodio di Olimpo*, *SEAug* 21 (Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1985).

- lical book of Jonah³⁹ and Roberta Franchi's work on Methodius' exegesis of Genesis 1:26.⁴⁰
- iv. Important writings were made accessible to a broader interested public through *translations into modern Italian*. In 2000, the *Symposium* was translated into Italian by Normando Antoniono,⁴¹ *De resurrectione* ten years later (2010) by Mirosław Mejzner and Benedetta Zorzi,⁴² and *De autexusio* followed another five years later (2015) in the translation by Roberta Franchi.⁴³
 - v. Finally, Methodius is perceived as *translation literature*. In addition to the Old Slavonic translation, the Armenian translation or reception of Methodius' *De autexusio* by Eznik of Kołb is increasingly being looked at. Here, Susanne Zeilfelder's two volume edition of Eznik of Kołb, *Elc ałandoc'*, accompanied by a philological commentary and a German translation,⁴⁴ must be mentioned as well as – published after the Jena Methodius Conference – an essay by Alessandro Orenigo dealing with “Eznik of Kołb as a translator of Methodius of Olympus.”⁴⁵

Through the above-mentioned works, a contoured picture of this early Christian theologian has been sketched in the last twenty years, which, however, still needs to be supplemented. The various research interests cover a broad spectrum, from Methodius' theology including his reception of and discussion with early Christian authors, his location in his historical intellectual context, and his discussion with the contemporary philosophical schools up to the transmission of his writings in the early translations. Of great importance is the expansion of the source basis by taking into account manuscripts of the Old Slavonic translation (Bracht, Franchi, Kiel,

39 Dmitrij Bumazhnov, “Zwei Fallstudien zur Exegese des Alten Testaments bei den Kirchenvätern. I. Die Auslegung der Jona-Geschichte in De resurrectione des Hl. Methodius von Olympus,” in *Das Alte Testament als christliche Bibel in orthodoxer und westlicher Sicht: Zweite orthodox-westliche Exegetenkonferenz im Rilakloster vom 8.–15. September 2001*, ed. Ivan Z. Dimitrov et al., WUNT 174 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004): 39–53.

40 Roberta Franchi, “Ispirazione biblica (Gen 1,26) e linguaggio pagano-filosofico in un passo del *De autexusio* di Metodio d'Olimpo,” *VetChr* 44 (2007): 239–56.

41 *Metodio di Olimpo, La verginità*, introd., trad. e note a cura di Normando Antoniono, CTePa 154 (Roma: Città Nuova, 2000).

42 *Metodio di Olimpo, La risurrezione. De resurrectione*, Introduzione di Mirosław Mejzner e Benedetta Zorzi, traduzione di Mirosław Mejzner (parte paleoslava) e Bendetta Zorzi (parte greca), note di Mirosław Mejzner, CTePa 216 (Roma: Città Nuova, 2010).

43 *Metodio d'Olimpo, Il libero arbitrio*, a cura di Roberta Franchi, *Lecture Cristiane del primo millennio* 53 (Milano: Paoline, 2015).

44 *Eznik von Kolb, Elc ałandoc'*, trans. and comm. Susanne Zeilfelder, Vol. 1: Text und Übersetzung. Vol. 2: Kommentar und Glossar, Grazer vergleichende Arbeiten 18 (Graz: Leykam, 2004).

45 Alessandro Orenigo, “Eznik of Kołb as a Translator of Methodius of Olympus,” in *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, eds. Francesca Gazzano, Lara Pagani and Giusto Traina, Trends in classics. Supplementary volumes 39 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016): 31–45.

Mejzner),⁴⁶ for they transmit a comprehensive Methodian corpus that is comprised of six of an overall amount of 14 or 15 writings that are known at least according to their titles.⁴⁷ The *Symposium*, which is missing in the Old Slavonic translation, is fortunately – as the only Methodian writing – completely preserved in the Greek. Taken together, the Greek *Symposium*, the Old Slavonic Methodian corpus, and the Greek fragments of considerable scope (i.e. fragments of the writings *De creatis*, *De lepra*, *De resurrectione*, and *In Job*) offer us a solid text basis.

3 New Perspectives: The Contributions of this Conference Volume

At the present time, Methodius of Olympus is of intense interest to those who study the history of the Church, Classical Greek, and Paleoslavonic Philology, as well as Armenology, especially in Europe (Germany, England, Italy, Poland, and Switzerland) and North America. The fact that a number of young researchers worldwide are currently researching topics related to Methodius is a testament to the relevance of this church figure. The Jena Methodius Conference sought to pool these divergent research activities across international, interdisciplinary, and generational boundaries by gathering seasoned and young scholars involved in Methodius research around a “round table.”

This conference volume, like a kaleidoscope, offers an insight into the variety of new research perspectives on Methodius of Olympus and documents how multifaceted and fruitful the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary access to Methodius of Olympus is, who through such research has come out of the shadows of an “*autore minore*.” The contributions in this volume depict Methodius as a learned, creative, and innovative author of the third century, who formulates and shapes his Christian identity by original reception and transformation of the pagan and Christian traditions that have been transmitted to him.

One of the main themes of this volume is Methodius’ *Symposium*. First, we look at the *Symposium* in its literary and intellectual historical context: Dawn LaValle Norman describes how Methodius’ *Symposium* is positioned within the literary context of the imperial Greek literature, particularly in the genre of the symposium, a genre which evolved since the fourth century B.C. into two separate strains (the Platonic and the Xenophonic symposium). Methodius’ innovative achievement lies precisely in his Platonic traditionalism, which ignores the much more modern Xenophonic strand of

⁴⁶ Bracht, *Vollkommenheit*; Franchi, *Metodio d’Olimpo. Il libero arbitrio*; Nikolai Kiel, *Ps-Athenagoras De Resurrectione*; Mejzner, *L’escatologia*; idem and Zorzi, *Metodio di Olimpo, La risurrezione*, parte paleoslava trad. di Mejzner. Cf. above note 16.

⁴⁷ See below the overview of Methodius’ writings.

the 3rd century. At the same time, he is not concerned with a nostalgic orientation to the past, but rather with the reorientation of his reader to the future: he applies the three level understanding of reality (shadow – image – reality) not only to the gospel, following Hebrews 10:1, but extends it throughout his *Symposium*. LaValle Norman thus shows that Methodius wants his *Symposium* to be understood a) as having been foreshadowed by the Platonic *Symposium*, and b) as a preliminary picture itself, foreshadowing the eschatological fulfillment in the end-time wedding feast.

What LaValle Norman strives to show by genre-historical research, *Katharina Bracht* confirms in her motif- and tradition-historical investigation. Bracht illuminates another aspect of the intellectual historical contexts in which Methodius' work emerged by focusing on the mythological background against which his writings should be read. Against the backdrop of the current mythological discussion, she demonstrates – as exemplified in the *Symposium* – how Methodius defines, in a differentiated way, a Christian identity by reference to the pagan tradition: by receiving the pagan Eros-myth in both its archaic form and its adaptation in the myth of Diotima which Plato himself invented, and by transforming Eros into ἀγνεία, Methodius gives the impression that his understanding of Christian identity in the 3rd century is radically new and radically different from Greek paganism.

Methodius' innovative force is also reflected in his dealings with the ecclesiastical tradition, as *Miroslaw Meznar* outlines in his study of Methodius' millenarianism. Although Methodius' *Symposium* and *De resurrectione* invoked certain images and symbols typical for Asian millenarianism, it was not his goal or purpose to explain the sequence of eschatological events in a didactic manner. Meznar proves that there is no clear mention of two-stage eschatological events in Methodius' writings. Rather, Methodius reinterpreted the traditional Asian millenarian ideas independently in order to achieve the main aim of the *Symposium*: “the praise of chastity, with particular distinction accorded to virginal life.”⁴⁸ Thus Meznar shows that Methodius' millenarianism has above all a functional – not doctrinal – character.

Amy Brown Hughes considers Methodius to be perhaps the only writer who offers a glimpse into the emerging ascetic theology. In her essay, she examines the link between virginity and Christology from the perspective of the literary and theological legacy of Methodius, concluding that Methodius' treatment of virginity is actually to be regarded as a christological discourse. According to Hughes, the exploration of Christology in these texts demonstrates the clash of hierarchized gendered constructions and the Christian imperative to love and be loved by God.

After these primarily theologically oriented contributions comes *Federica Candido*, who reads the *Symposium* from an institution-historical approach. She argues for the plausibility of an approach to this writing that views it as a historically reliable source for the reconstruction of the possible existence of female ascetic

⁴⁸ Meznar, *Methodius: Millenarist or Anti-Millenarist?*, see in this volume p. 79.

circles within the Christian communities of Asia Minor. She succeeds in finding elements that “seem to reflect some traces of the multifaceted world of female ascetic circles in Asia Minor before the formal advent of monasticism.”⁴⁹ In particular, she shows that it is likely that the *Symposium* already attests early on to the existence of Christian women διδάσκαλοι in Asia Minor.

The contributions on Methodius’ writings *De resurrectione* and *De autexusio* also highlight the creativity of his work. Methodius’ classical and Christian education is reflected in a great wealth of intertextual references and allusions that were intelligible to the contemporary, educated reader, but that must be presented and explained to the present reader. *Jon F. Dechow* investigates in how far Methodius was using “a blend of philosophical and biblical sources”⁵⁰ in order to argue against Origen, and demonstrates that Methodius distorts Origen’s authentic thought. However, Dechow makes the point that “Methodius deserves more to be considered competitive to [sc. Origen], not condemnatory of Origen.”⁵¹ *Selene Zorzi* analyzes the numerous language images that Methodius uses in his *De resurrectione* in order to denote and describe death, and in this way demonstrates how he developed the idea – an innovation in comparison to the previously used anthropologies in Asia Minor – that the human being was originally created immortal.

Furthermore, Methodius develops inherited themes in an original way, both in his promotion of free will and in his treatment of the stages of God’s οἰκονομία, which he points out against philosophical doctrines, as *Roberta Franchi* details in her contribution. She follows Methodius’ “conviction that our bodily and emotional disorder in the form of desire has deep roots in the history of humankind and in the choices of its first representatives” Adam and Eve,⁵² showing that Methodius takes up this issue in the *De autexusio*, develops it in the *Symposium*, and finally accomplishes it in the *De resurrectione*. Thereby, she presents important arguments for the chronology of Methodius’ writings in addition to Patterson’s.⁵³

Additionally, the work on the source text, the genuine church historical and philosophical foundation for research, has not yet been completed. *Janina Sieber* reports on the preparatory work of her new edition and translation of the *Symposium* and demonstrates, on the basis of the speech of Markella (*symp.* I), that a new edition and German translation – a replacement of the editions by Bonwetsch (GCS 27, 1917) and Musurillo (SC 95, 1963), as well as of the translation by Leonhard Fendt in the series *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter* (1911) – can lead to a new interpretation of this text.

49 Candido, *The Symposium of Methodius*, see in this volume p. 120.

50 Dechow, *Methodius’ Conceptual World*, see in this volume p. 126.

51 Dechow, *Methodius’ Conceptual World*, see in this volume p. 145.

52 Franchi, *Where Does the Impulse to Evil Come from?*, see in this volume p. 192.

53 See Lloyd George Patterson’s dissertation *The Anti-Origenist Theology of Methodius of Olympus* (New York: Columbia University, 1958), and idem, *Divine Sovereignty*.

Similarly, *Anna Jouravel* presents observations on *De lepra* that she made while preparing a critical edition of the Old Slavonic version of this writing. She elucidates the relationship between the Old Slavonic translation and the original Greek text, as well as the rhetorical structure of the writing. *Yannis Kakridis* places the concrete findings of *De lepra* into a wider context by using *De autexusio* as an example to show which difficulties the Slavonic translators had to overcome in the reproduction of the argumentative form of their Greek texts, since the Greek language possesses a rich palette of expressions for the representation of discourse positions, while the development of the Slavonic language at that time was still in its infancy in this regard. At the same time, the search for interdependencies with other ancient writers continues. Accordingly, in his contribution *Nikolai Kiel* demonstrates, based on his analysis of *De resurrectione* II,18,9b.10a, that Methodius not only absorbs Ps-Athenagoras' *De resurrectione* but also Ps-Justin's writing on the resurrection, which goes by the same name.

This conference volume closes with two contributions on the Armenian reception history. *Susanne Zeilfelder* introduces the reader to the Armenian paraphrase of *De autexusio* in Eznik of Kołb's *Etc alandoc'* (*Against Heresies*) and meticulously proves that Eznik, who never gives proof of his sources, depends on Methodius. *Armenuhi Drost-Abgarjan* examines the Armenian tradition of Methodius of Patara, how he is generally referenced in the Orthodox Churches, and documents the result of a fascinating appropriation process: Although in addition to the *De autexusio*-reception in Eznik of Kołb only two pseudepigraphic writings are known, namely the *Apocalypse* of Ps-Methodius and – according to the judgment of Friedrich Loofs – an early sermon on the ascension of Christ, the Armenian synaxaries, however, preserve the traditional knowledge about the martyrdom and bishop's office of Methodius of Patara. Ps-Methodius and Methodius of Patara apparently merge in the Armenian tradition into the image of Methodius as the Armenian martyr and prophet.

4 To-Do List for Future Methodius Research

In the final round of discussion, the participants at the Jena Methodius Conference determined which tasks future Methodius research should focus on after the results of this concentrated gathering of scholars and scholarship came to a close.

At the top of the to-do list is work on the text basis. In this area, the critical edition of the Old Slavonic translation once again is of utmost importance and is urgently needed in order to provide the world of Methodius researchers with a *complete* textual basis for scientific research. Only on this basis it is possible to complete the author's overall image, which promises a considerable gain in knowledge.

The current work on the new edition of the Greek text of the *Symposium*, which Janina Sieber is preparing, suggests that it would be worthwhile to rework or update the other Greek fragments that are in Bonwetsch's edition. Even the Syrian fragments

are not to be forgotten: no attention has been given to them since their publication by Pitra. Whether or not their contents will contribute to the improvement of the text basis has yet to be revealed. Finally, the conference showed that there are still questions to be answered regarding the Armenian Methodius and the Ps-Methodius tradition.

Second, a new research perspective was opened at the Jena Methodius Conference: the reception history of the Methodian writings. It has been shown that the translations of these works into Armenian and Slavonic as well as their respective manuscript traditions are not only important for the reconstruction of the Methodian corpus, but also have worth as sources for the history of the church at the place and time of translation/transmission. The writings of Methodius, which arose in service to the self-assertion of early Christianity, have entered into the writings of peoples who were later won to the Christian faith and in an analogous manner passed through the phase of the self-assurance of young Christianity. The clarification of the questions, “from which church situation, in which power and educational context, and with which aim in mind were the translations made and through repeated copying handed down,” permits us to expect relevant insights into Armenian and Slavonic church history and history of theology during the Middle Ages. Corresponding questions are also to be posed for the fragments handed down in Syriac, which promise to contribute to our understanding of the Syrian church at that time.

Third, many contributions to this volume point out that their respective thematic fields are in need of more in-depth research.⁵⁴ Furthermore, there is still no study that examines Methodius’ treatment of Holy Scriptures on the textual basis of the entire Methodian corpus along reception historical lines. All in all, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary access during this conference proved to be very fruitful because the collective efforts of philologists and theologians with regard to questions of vocabulary and grammar, translation techniques, structure of argumentation and literary genre as well as the (church) historical and philosophical-theological frameworks proved to contribute decisively to the precise and pertinent interpretation of the source text. Future interdisciplinary collaborations, therefore, would promise to produce fruitful results.

⁵⁴ See the comments in the individual contributions of this volume.

5 Appendix: Overview of the Writings of Methodius of Olympus⁵⁵

	Abbreviation	Title (Latin version)	Title according to the Dialogue partner	Language	CPG I
Dialogues	<i>aut./ arbitr./ lib. arb.</i>	De autexusio/ De libero arbitrio	(Maximus)	Old Slavonic; Greek and Armenian fragments	1811
	<i>creat.</i>	De creatis	Xeno	Greek fragments	1817
	<i>lepr.</i>	De lepra	Sistelius	Old Slavonic; Greek fragments	1815
	<i>res.</i>	De resurrectione	Aglaophon	Old Slavonic; Greek and Syrian fragments	1812 1825
	<i>symp.</i>	Symposium		Greek; Syrian fragment	1810
Treatises	<i>cib.</i>	De cibis	Chilona	Old Slavonic	1814
	<i>fr. 1–25 in Job</i>	Fragmenta in Job		Greek fragments	1819
	<i>sang.</i>	De sanguisuga	Eustachius	Old Slavonic	1816
	<i>vit.</i>	De vita		Old Slavonic	1813
Very short fragments	<i>fr. 1–2 mart.</i>	Fragmenta de martyribus		Greek fragments	1820
	<i>fr. in Gen.</i>	Fragmentum in Genesin (Hier. <i>vir. ill.</i> 83)		Greek fragment (on Gen 3,19)	1821

⁵⁵ For the places of publication, see *Clavis Patrum Graecorum, Vol. 1: Patres Antenicæni*, ed. Mauritius Gerard, CChr (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 248–53, Nr. 1810–30. On the handwritten transmission of the Old Slavonic Methodian corpus, see the contribution of Anna Jouravel, „Beobachtungen zu Methodius’ Schrift *De lepra*,” in this volume p. 213–6.

Lost writings	<i>Cant.</i>	Commentarius in Canticum Cantorum (Hier. <i>vir. ill.</i> 83)		
	<i>carn.</i>	De carne (announced in <i>sang.</i> 10,4, but possibly identical with <i>res.</i> ⁵⁶)		
	<i>Porph.</i>	Adversus Porphyrium (Hier. <i>vir. ill.</i> 83) ⁵⁷		1818
	<i>pyth.</i>	Adversus Origenem de pythonissa (Hier. <i>vir. ill.</i> 83)		
Ps-Methodius		Apocalypsis 7. Jh.	Syrian; Greek translation in four recensions; translations into Latin, Armenian, Arabic and Old Slavonic	1830
	<i>Sym. et Ann.</i>	Sermo de Symeone et Anna	Greek	1827
		Sermo in ascensionem D.N. Iesu Christi	Armenian fragments	1829
	<i>palm.</i>	Sermo in ramos palmarum	Greek	1828

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⁵⁶ Patterson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 26 f.

⁵⁷ The fragments edited by Bonwetsch, *Methodius*, GCS 27: 503–7 as *Porph.* 1–3 are considered spurious according to the judgment of Buchheit, *Studien*, 120–9.

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Dawn LaValle Norman

Coming Late to the Table

Methodius in the Context of Sympotic Literary Development

1 Introduction

1.1 Methodius' *Symposium* and Imperial Symposia

When Methodius wrote the most famous of his works, the *Symposium*, or *On Chastity*, the Symposium was a popular genre.¹ Imperial Symposia abounded, which took as their models and modified the founding Socratic *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon. Plutarch in the 2nd century wrote not one, but two sympotic works: *Quaestiones Convivales* is a collection of different sympotic moments that took place over many years, and *Septem Sapientium Convivium* (*Symposium of the Seven Wise Men*) recounts the conversations at a wedding banquet set in the mythical time of the archaic wise men, couching a collection of archaic wisdom within an elaborate narrative structure. In the early 3rd century, Athenaeus wrote the *Deipnosophistae*, a sprawling work that covers a dinner party among friends in Rome and amasses an enormous amount of quotation from the archive. Other Christians used the genre as well: Lactantius, an exact contemporary of Methodius, wrote a Latin *Symposium* on his way from North Africa to the court of Diocletian, which may or may not survive.² The popularity of the Symposium continued well after Methodius, with Julian the Apostate and Macrobius, among others, turning their hand to the genre.

But while the Symposium was a popular genre when Methodius was writing, the way he was writing his Symposium was not popular. By the Imperial period, the Symposium had grown into a host genre useful for compiling a great amount of information, a development which I will argue stems from the model of Xenophon rather than that of Plato. Many authors of the Imperial period were fond of the Symposium

¹ Throughout this article, I will use the “Symposium” to refer to the genre of the literary Symposium, “symposium” to refer to the cultural institution of the symposium, and “*Symposium*” to refer to any specific text by this name.

² That *Symposium* may have survived under the name of the *Symposium of the Twelve Wise Men*, if Anne Friedrich is correct in her attestation. The text which she edits is a collection of twelve rounds of contributions of different types of poems from twelve wise men, growing in size from one-line maxims up to 10–25 line poems. There is no scene-setting, however, making this a very different type of Symposium than the others studied in this article, cf. Anne Friedrich, *Das Symposium der XII Sapientes: Kommentar und Verfasserfrage* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).

because its loose structure provided an excellent opportunity to recollect and collect fragments of the past: either an author's individual past, as with Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*, or the cultural past embedded in a rich archive of quotation, such as Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*. The Symposium was also embraced as an opportunity to gather a guest list of dead luminaries and watch them converse; it was ready-made for the type of nostalgic literary activity that was attractive to some Imperial-era writers.³ Unlike his contemporaries, Methodius' work avoids the compilation style and sticks to one topic, making him look more like Plato than Xenophon. But he also avoids any whiff of nostalgia, breaking away on his own branch of the sympotic tree and creating a new, distinctly Christian type of Symposium that focused not on the past but on the future.⁴

This article will look first at the development of the Sympotic genre, from its two founders Plato and Xenophon, up to the Imperial period. Using evidence from later Symposia combined with descriptions in ancient rhetorical handbooks, I will show that by the Imperial period Xenophon's *Symposium* was a vital model for the genre. With this background in place, I will next show that Methodius' innovation is to ignore the Xenophontic developments of the Symposium to claim descent from Plato alone. Methodius' *Symposium* is strange beyond his obvious innovations in the gender of his symposiasts and topic of conversation: he is strange precisely in his Platonic traditionalism. Finally I will turn to the question of *why* he might have chosen to be strange, concluding that it is because of his dedication to reorienting his readers' imaginative preoccupation away from the past towards focusing it on the future.

1.2 Belatedness

But first, a word about belatedness, about coming late to the table. Before the final speech in Methodius' *Symposium* (Domnina's 10th), the external narrators take a moment to reflect on the difficulties of coming last.

Eubulion: I am very anxious, Gregorion, when I consider for myself in what sort of confusion Domnina was now, with her heart agitated within her and fearing that she be at a loss for words and utter something lacking that of the other virgins, since the things that had already been said were of such a kind and so various from what came before (τοσοῦτων ἤδη ῥηθέντων εἰς τὸ προκειμένον καὶ ποικίλων). If she was obvious in being disturbed, come and complete your

³ It also thereby allowed writers to converse with the dead, cf. Jason König, *Saints and Symposiasts: The Literature of Food and the Symposium in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 41–52.

⁴ This is a revolution that will be followed in turn by Julian the Apostate fifty years later in a polemically anti-Christian way.

account. For I am amazed if she had anything to say, having drawn the very last lot (τελευταία κεκληρωμένη).

Gregorion: Theopatra told me that she *was* agitated – exceedingly so, Eubulion, but she was not at a loss for words.⁵

(Meth. *symp.* 9.5)

Domnina has pulled a difficult draw time, coming to speak last after nine other extended forays on the topic of chastity, including the stunning contribution of Thecla. The foregoing speeches were of such a kind and so various (τοσοῦτων ἤδη ῥηθέντων [...] καὶ ποικίλων) that there simply seems to be nothing left to say. But Domnina is up to the challenge and contributes a competent and vigorous speech. Domnina's fear, like that of some of the other virgins, is staged so that her triumph can be all the more emphasized. Gregorion, hearing of her plight, may express fear on her behalf, but she need not. As the virgins elsewhere claim, rhetoric is inexhaustible (Theopatra, Meth. *symp.* 4).

In her staged fear and conquest over it, Domnina nicely ventriloquizes Methodius' own concern with placing himself in the long tradition of Sympotic writing with such illustrious predecessors as Plato, Xenophon and Plutarch. One may well wonder what more can be said; why write yet another Symposium? Like many writers of the Imperial period,⁶ Methodius emphasizes the anxiety of belatedness and proclaims his own sense of coming late into the picture. But he does so with great confidence and a conviction that he is, indeed, doing something stunningly new, something that none of the foregoing writers have dreamed about: he has written a Symposium about *chastity*, which he staunchly believes could not have been written until Jesus introduced this particular virtue to humanity 250 years previously.⁷ And with that introduction comes a new relationship with time; a line has begun which will continue until it is further fulfilled by Christ coming again in glory. Just as Domnina blushes to follow so many past speeches, yet adds her contribution confidently and innovatively, so too does Methodius use the trope of following in a well-worn tradition to point to

5 *Méthode d'Olympe, Le banquet*, ed. Herbert Musurillo and trans. Victor-Henry Debidour, SC 95 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963). All translations from Methodius' *Symposium* are my own.

6 E.g. "[...] the writers of the first three centuries C.E. show an obsessive interest in the past and in the past of the classical city in particular: they are acutely conscious of their own belated status" (Simon Goldhill, "Rhetoric and the Second Sophistic," in *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, ed. Erik Gunderson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009]: 228). "Certainly it is hard to deny that [Imperial Greek literature] is a body of literature that is obsessed with the past" (König, *Saints*, 8). "By re-creating the situations of the past the contrast between the immense prosperity and the distressing dependence of the contemporary Greek world was dulled [...]" (Ewen Bowie, "Greeks and Their Past in the Second Sophistic," *PaP* 46 [Feb. 1970]: 41).

7 The first virgin to speak, Marcella, explains that chastity was not praised in the Old Testament because it was reserved for Christ alone to reveal this new phase of human progress (Meth. *symp.* 1.2–4).

his radical break with that tradition, striking out into previously unexplored territory, playing with the possibility of writing a Symposium that does not memorialize the past, but pushes the reader towards the future.

But Methodius' aesthetic manoeuvres can only be understood if put in the context of the growing importance of Xenophon in the Sympotic writers of the Imperial period. In order to understand the future-focused aesthetic of Methodius, we need to go back to the founding of the Sympotic genre and correct a bias in scholarship. We need a new understanding of the past in order to understand the future correctly.

2 Xenophon in the History of Sympotic Development

Scholars often comment that unlike most genres, we can point to a particular time and place where the philosophical dialogue was born, in the literary circles around Socrates.⁸ The Symposium, as a sub-genre of the philosophical dialogue, was formed into its particular shape even more specifically by two Socratic writers as they engaged in a literary rivalry: Plato and Xenophon.⁹ Imperial scholars and authors were vividly aware of the importance of both Xenophon and Plato as precedents, although modern scholars are more likely to think of Plato as the more important precedent.¹⁰ To show

⁸ “Dialogue is unusual among literary genres in that we can speak quite specifically about where and when it began, and can even point to an historical individual who inspired the form: the first prose dialogues were representations of Socrates, the Athenian philosopher and teacher who was put to death in 399 BCE [...] while a number of antecedents to the genre have been identified, there is no evidence that anyone wrote prose dialogues before these so-called *Sôkratikoî logoi* – Socratic ‘dialogues’, ‘discourses’ or ‘texts’” (Andrew Ford, “The Beginnings of Dialogue: Socratic Discourses and Fourth-Century Prose,” in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, ed. Simon Goldhill [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008]: 29).

⁹ Ancient commentators detected this rivalry: “And it seems that Xenophon was not on good terms with him [Plato]. At any rate, they have written similar narratives as if out of rivalry with each other, a *Symposium*, a *Defense of Socrates*, and their moral treatises or *Memorabilia*.” (D.L. 3.34, *Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Robert Drew Hicks, LCL 184 [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925], 307–9). Although the majority scholarly opinion is that Xenophon’s work is responding as a corrective to Plato’s, there have been two arguments strenuously made for the primacy of at least an earlier version of Xenophon’s *Symposium*, Holger Thesleff, “The Interrelation and Date of the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon.” *BICS* 25 (1978): 157–70, and Gabriel Danzig, “Intra-Socratic polemics: the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon,” *GRBS* 45.4 (2005): 331–57.

¹⁰ For instance, Jason König, one of the most insightful modern scholars of Imperial Symposia (including Methodius), frequently substitutes the term “sympotic genre” with “Platonic symposium tradition” (e.g. König, *Saints*, 15 and 29), and in his whole book only gives a short nod in the direction of Xenophon (König, *Saints*, 11). Oikonomopoulou’s 2007 dissertation makes a similar move, with a similar uncomfortable inclusion of Xenophon as an embarrassing uncle: “The tradition has a number

the equal primacy of Xenophon with Plato as a generic model in the ancient viewpoint, I will bring forth two pieces of evidence: Plutarch's citations of Xenophon as an important predecessor to his *Quaestiones Convivales* (and the sympotic genre more broadly), and our only "definition" of the sympotic genre found in an ancient work of literary criticism. The evidence from these sources show that Imperial symposia were explicitly Xenophontic.

2.1 Plutarch's Definition

In his *Quaestiones Convivales*, Plutarch of Chaeronea includes multiple moments when he steps back to analyse the genre in which he is writing, supporting our understanding of the importance of Xenophon as a Plutarchian model. During his prefatory address to his dedicatee Sossius Senecio, he legitimates his current project by laying down a list of previous Symposia, and follows it up with an explanation of how his literary activity relates to what other authors have done before him.

[...] yet to consign to utter oblivion all that occurs at a drinking-party is not only opposed to what we call the friend-making character of the dining-table, but also has the most famous of the philosophers bear witness against it – Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Speusippus, Epicurus, Prytanis, Hieronymus, and Dio of the Academy, who all considered the recording of conversations held at table a task worth some effort [...].

(Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 612D–612E [LCL 424:7])¹¹

In Plutarch's mind, a literary Symposium records conversations that occurred while drinking, but *writing* a Symposium primarily puts you in a long line of philosophic and literary tradition, which starts with Plato and Xenophon.

of Classical forefathers, such as Ion of Chios or Xenophon, but its principal model text, to the format and content of which all the later works appear to allude, is Plato's *Symposium*" (Katerina Oikonomopoulou, *The Symposium in the Greek and Roman World of the High Empire: Literary Forms and Intellectual Realities* [Unpublished dissertation, University of Oxford, 2007], 15. cf. 23). In the excellent Introduction to their volume on Plutarch's *Table Talk*, Klotz and Oikonomopoulou emphasize the plurality of literary sympotic models available to Imperial writers, yet at times still assume Platonic priority: "Their authors [in the long tradition of Greek philosophical writing on the symposium] were key philosophers such as Aristotle, Theophrastus, Hieronymus, Aristoxenus, and Epicurus, pointing to post-Platonic philosophy's creative exploration of the legacy of the Platonic *Symposium*." (Frieda Klotz and Katerina Oikonomopoulou. *The Philosopher's Banquet: Plutarch's Table Talk in the Intellectual Culture of the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 13.)

¹¹ Apart from Plutarch's citations, we know nothing of the Symposia of the final three authors, Prytanis, Hieronymus, and Dio of the Academy. For the Greek text with translation see *Plutarch. Moralia, Volume VIII: Table-talk, Books 1–6*, ed. and trans. Paul A. Clement and Herbert B. Hoffleit, LCL 424 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 7.

At two other later points Plutarch singles out Plato and Xenophon's *Symposia* alone of sympotic precedents. The first is in the programmatic first question of the first book, during the discussion of when philosophical debates are appropriate at drinking parties.

For if the majority of the guests at the party are learned men, like Socrates, Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus at the dinner of Agathon, and Charmides, Antisthenes, Hermogenes, and others like them at the dinner of Callias, we shall let them talk philosophy, blending Dionysus not less with the Muses than with the Nymphs.

(Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 613D [LCL 424:13])

Here the two examples of philosophic *Symposia* for Plutarch have been reduced down from the more expansive list in his preface to Xenophon and Plato alone. The same thing happens in the preface to Book 6, where Plato and Xenophon are again the only two *Symposia* mentioned and are given equal weight.

On the other hand, the topics of philosophical inquiry and discussion not only give pleasure by remaining ever present and fresh to those who actually recall them, but they also provide just as good a feast on the same food to those who, having been left out, partake of them through oral report. In this way, it is even today open to men of literary taste (τοις φιλολόγοις) to enjoy and share in the Socratic banquets (τῶν Σωκρατικῶν συμποσίων) as much as did the original diners. Yet if pleasure were purely physical, the proper thing would have been for both Xenophon and Plato to leave us a record, not of conversation, but of the relishes, cakes, and sweets served at Callias's house and Agathon's. As it is, they never deign to mention such matters, for all the expense and effort these presumably involved; but they preserve in writing only the philosophical discussions, combining fun with serious effort (μετὰ παιδιᾶς σπουδάζοντες). Thus they have left precedents (παράδειγματα) to be followed not only in meeting together for good conversation over wine, but in recording the conversation afterwards.

(Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 686C [LCL 424:455])

Plutarch takes the trouble to make multiple explicit references to his two primary sympotic models of Plato and Xenophon. Furthermore he flags the importance of Xenophon by making his own definition of the literary *Symposium* a reference to the opening line of Xenophon's *Symposium*, as well as switching the order of citation so that now Xenophon comes first in the list.¹²

¹² X. *Smp.* 1.1 "To my mind it is worthwhile to relate not only the serious acts of gentlemen but also what they do in their lighter moments (Ἄλλ' ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ τῶν καλῶν κάγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἔργα οὐ μόνον τὰ μετὰ σπουδῆς πραττόμενα ἀξιωματόμενα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐν ταῖς παιδιαῖς)." (Xenophon. *Memorabilia. Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology*, ed. and trans. Edgar Cardew Marchant and Otis Johnson Todd, revised by Jeffrey Henderson. LCL 168 [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013], 565).