

# Saving Severus: How Severus of Antioch's Writings Survived in Greek

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**I**N THE SUMMER of 536, following a failed attempt to reach a compromise between the advocates and opponents of the Council of Chalcedon, Emperor Justinian came down resolutely on the Chalcedonian side. He issued a novella ordering all extant writings of Severus, exiled patriarch of Antioch and leading spokesman of the anti-Chalcedonian cause, to be burned.<sup>1</sup> Possessors of Severus' works faced harsh punishment and the hands of scribes found copying them were to be amputated.<sup>2</sup> The novella was to be distributed to all metropolitan bishops, who, in turn, were tasked with making sure it was publicly posted in each and every church throughout the Empire.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The literature on Severus is large. Some recent major studies are: Pauline Allen and C. T. R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (London/New York 2004); Frédéric Alpi, *La route royale: Sévère d'Antioche I–II* (Beirut 2009); Yonatan Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies: Christology, Society and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 2016); John D'Alton and Youhanna Youssef (eds.), *Severus of Antioch: His Life and Times* (Leiden 2016).

<sup>2</sup> For the relevant part of *Nov. 42, Constitutio sacra contra Anthimum, Severum, Petrum et Zoaram*, dated 6 August 536, see R. Schoell and G. Kroll, *Corpus Juris Civilis* III (Berlin 1928) 263–269, at 266. *Nov. 42* came in the wake of a home synod led by Menas of Constantinople in the spring of 536, which anathematized Severus' writings as “feeding off the venom of the serpent, the originator of evil (δράκων ἀρχέκακος)”: Mansi VIII 1142D.

<sup>3</sup> Schoell and Kroll, *Corpus* III 268–269. To what degree this universal demand was carried out in practice is hard to tell. For a discussion of the promulgation and application of Justinian's novellae see Giuliana Lanata, *Legislazione e natura nelle Novelle giustiniane* (Naples 1984) 107–161, esp. 156–161. A recently published letter of Severus offers evidence for one case of the patriarch's writings being subjected to the flames as the result of

As a result of this decree, what survives of Severus' extensive corpus, originally written in Greek, has come down to us mostly in Syriac and, to a lesser extent, Coptic—two of the languages used in the anti-Chalcedonian churches.<sup>4</sup> Already during Severus' lifetime, and in the case of some writings, almost immediately after he penned them, Severus was translated into Syriac.<sup>5</sup> The anti-Chalcedonian Syrian Orthodox Church, which, in the generations after Severus' death, gradually emerged as its own ecclesial community, independent of the Chalcedonian imperial church, treated the writings of their cherished leader with great care.<sup>6</sup> They developed a 'masoretic'

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Justinian's ban. According to the report, the book miraculously survived, though Severus, interestingly, downplays the event. See Volker Menze and Kutlu Akalin, "Kann man Bücher verbrennen? Severus of Antioch's Letter to Nonnus Scholasticus, a Heretical Codex, and a Late Roman *Autodafé*," *OC* 97 (2013/4) 1–23; I owe this reference to Sergey Minov. Severus' downplaying of the event, it may be noted, accords with his approach elsewhere. See Yonatan Moss, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Text: Severus of Antioch, the Babylonian Talmud, and Beyond," in Carol Harrison et al. (eds.), *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-first Century* (Turnhout 2015) 521–545, at 521–531; and Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies* 56–59. With regard to the main question of how systematically Justinian's ban was enforced, see further n.28 below.

<sup>4</sup> Lucas Van Rompay, "Severus, Patriarch of Antioch (512–538), in the Greek, Syriac, and Coptic Traditions," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 8 (2008) 3–22; Youhanna Youssef, *The Life and Works of Severus of Antioch in the Coptic and Copto-Arabic Tradition* (Piscataway 2014).

<sup>5</sup> MS. *Vat.Syr.* 140, a translation by Paul of Callinicum of the dossier of letters between Severus and Julian of Halicarnassus together with the series of treatises Severus wrote against Julian, gives in the colophon 528 CE as the date of its completion. There also survives in several manuscripts a Syriac translation of Severus' homilies from the first half of the sixth century (its earliest dated manuscript is from 563 CE), which in modern scholarship is often attributed to Paul of Callinicum. See Maurice Brière, *Les Homiliae Cathedrales de Sévère d'Antioche* (PO 29 [Paris 1960]) 5–72, at 17–33. For skepticism about this attribution see Daniel King, "Paul of Callinicum and his Place in the History of Syriac Literature," *Le Muséon* 120 (2007) 327–349.

<sup>6</sup> On the gradual process of separation from the imperial church, which

tradition collecting difficult and rare words appearing in his corpus; they preserved his writings in special collections, reworked some of his texts into more precise Syriac, wrote learned scholia in the margins of his manuscripts, and, of course, endlessly cited passages from Severus alongside the writings of the other revered Greek and Syriac church fathers in florilegia, works of canon law, and new theological treatises.<sup>7</sup>

As much as Severus was cherished and venerated in the anti-Chalcedonian churches, he was feared and despised in the Chalcedonian, imperially controlled Byzantine Church. Justinian, as mentioned, decreed draconian measures against the preservation and production of his writings. Opposition to Severus' thought and detailed refutations of his claims were the hallmark of the prominent Greek theologians of the sixth and seventh centuries. Leontius of Byzantium, Leontius of Jerusalem, Eustathius the Monk, and Anastasius of Sinai cite extensively from Severus and dedicate much space in their writings to arguing against him.<sup>8</sup> To these Byzantine theo-

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Severus was in fact strongly against, see Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies* 44–74; Nestor Kavvadas, “Severus of Antioch and Changing Miaphysite Attitudes toward Byzantium,” in D’Alton and Youssef, *Severus* 124–137.

<sup>7</sup> On the ‘masoretic’ tradition and the scholia surrounding Severus’ works see Jonathan Loopstra, *Patristic Selections in the “Masoretic” Handbooks of the Qarqaptā Tradition* (diss. Catholic Univ. of America 2009) 93–108, 159–165, 199–211. On Jacob of Edessa’s reworking of the Syriac of Severus’ homilies see Lucas Van Rompay, “Jacob of Edessa and the Sixth-Century Translator of Severus of Antioch’s Cathedral Homilies,” in R. B. ter Haar Romeny, *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of his Day* (Leiden 2008) 189–204. Work remains to be done on Severus’ extensive reception in West Syrian theology and canon law. For an impression of the scope of Severus’ presence in this tradition one may consult the General Index at the end of William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838 I–III* (London 1870–1872). Compare III 1322–1324 (three and a half columns dedicated to Severus references) with 1271–1272 (less than three full columns dedicated to Ephrem the Syrian) and 1265–1266 (three columns dedicated to Cyril of Alexandria).

<sup>8</sup> Leontius of Byzantium, *Thirty Chapters against Severus and Resolution of the Objections Raised by Severus*, PG 86.2.1901–1945 (CPG 6813, 6814). Leontius

logians Severus' Christology posed a grave threat to orthodoxy; belief in it jeopardized salvation. Severus is not only a heretic;<sup>9</sup> his twisted misinterpretation of the writings of the church fathers made him into a patricide, as Leontius of Jerusalem writes.<sup>10</sup> Or, to cite Anastasius of Sinai, Severus was none other than the Antichrist himself.<sup>11</sup>

Given all this, it comes as a great surprise to find that this heretical, patricidal Antichrist has managed to find a place of honor in the Greek-speaking church. Despite Justinian's harsh and unequivocal decree, the portion of Severus' oeuvre that survives in its original Greek is not negligible.<sup>12</sup> The survival of some of this material can be easily explained: scant papyrological evidence that may well predate Justinian's ban,<sup>13</sup> extensive

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of Jerusalem, *Testimonies of the Saints*, PG 86.2.1804D–1901A (ed. Patrick T. R. Gray, *Leontius of Jerusalem: Against the Monophysites* [Oxford 2006] 46–161), is dedicated to a refutation of those whose “guide (καθηγητής) is Severus” (PG 86.2.1805A; Gray 46). See further Gray 23–25, 40. For Eustathius the Monk see his *Epistle on Two Natures against Severus*, ed. Pauline Allen, *Diversorum Postchalconensium Auctorum Collectanea* 1 (Turnhout/Leuven 1989) 390–476, and her “Greek Citations from Severus of Antioch in Eustathius Monachus,” *OLP* 12 (1981) 261–264. Anastasius of Sinai's *Viae Dux* is a defense of Chalcedon, primarily against the writings of Severus: Karl-Heinz Uthemann, *Anastasii Sinaitae Viae dux* (Leuven 1981); cf. Henry Chadwick's review, *JThS* 34 (1983) 314–315, characterizing the main body of the work as an “onslaught upon Severus of Antioch.”

<sup>9</sup> Gray, *Leontius* 94–95, 120–121 (PG 86.2.1841B, 1864C).

<sup>10</sup> Gray, *Leontius* 120 (PG 86.2.1864C), Σεβήρος ὁ πατραλοίας.

<sup>11</sup> Anastasius *Viae dux* 6.1, 7.1, 7.2 (PG 89 104B.113B–C, 121A; Uthemann 96, 107, 114).

<sup>12</sup> Loopstra, *Patristic Selections* 101, writes of a ban that Justinian's predecessor Justin placed on Severus' writings already in 519. He cites (n.55) J. B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* II (Paris 1901) 169–173, as a source, but I could not find such information there. As far as I can tell, Justinian is the first to have decreed a formal ban on Severus' works, even if imperial persecution against Severus and other anti-Chalcedonian bishops had been ongoing to various degrees of severity since the summer of 518.

<sup>13</sup> Kurt Treu and Johannes Diethart, *Griechische literarische Papyri christlichen Inhaltes* II (Vienna 1993) 26–27; Enzo Lucchesi, “La version copte de

fragments cited by Severus' opponents with the purpose of combatting him,<sup>14</sup> and one homily that was preserved in Greek owing to the misidentification of its author,<sup>15</sup> fits in with the survival patterns of other authors deemed heretical by the Byzantine church. Yet Severus' robust presence in the rich Byzantine manuscript tradition of biblical catenae does come as a surprise. The manuscripts of this tradition that survive to us were mostly produced from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, but their sources originally go back to collections made in late antiquity.<sup>16</sup> In several of these collections, Severus' interpretations of biblical verses are commonly cited alongside a whole range of Greek Fathers. When cited in these contexts, Severus is never introduced as a threatening quantity; often he is even

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l'homélie LX de Sévère d'Antioche. Appendice II," *Aegyptus* 84 (2004) 215–216. See further Van Rompay, *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 8 (2008) 6, 17–18.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the Chalcedonian authors mentioned above, who all cite multiple extracts from Severus, see Franz Diekamp, *Doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi* (Münster 1907) 356—from the index to this diphysite florilegium, thought to have been written around the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries. The index lists some twenty different citations from Severus' treatises and letters. For textual questions involved in the survival of Severus' Greek in the writings of his opponents, see Allen, *OLP* 12 (1981) 261–264.

<sup>15</sup> M.-A. Kugener and E. Triffaux, *Les Homiliae Cathedrales de Sévère d'Antioche. Homélie LXXVII* (PO 16 [Paris 1922] 765–864, with 773–785 for a classification of the twenty-two extant pre-15<sup>th</sup> century Greek manuscripts of this homily, transmitted under the names of Gregory of Nyssa and Hesychius of Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to the works of Robert Devreesse and Françoise Petit, discussed in further detail below, see F. Nau, "Quelques nouveaux textes grecs tirés de Sévère d'Antioche à l'occasion d'une récente publication," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 27 (1929) 3–30; Gilles Dorival, "Nouveaux fragments grecs de Sévère d'Antioche," in *ANTIΔΩPON: Hommage à Maurits Geerard* (Wetteren 1984) 101–121; Konrad F. Zawadzki, "Neue griechische Fragmente des Cyrill von Alexandrien, (Pseudo) Athanasius, Philoxenos, Severus von Antiochien und Ammonios," *ΖΑC* 18 (2014) 260–282, at 277–280.

introduced as a saint.<sup>17</sup> Decoding the logic of Severus' survival in the Byzantine catenae is the task of this paper.

To do so we must begin with a brief review of the available evidence. The history of the biblical catenae is complex.<sup>18</sup> In the 1920's Karl Staab offered a theory about the historical stages of emergence of the catenae on the Pauline and the Catholic Epistles.<sup>19</sup> Among other things, his research revealed that when it comes to Severus, there is a significant difference between these two groups of New Testament documents. The catenae on the Pauline Epistles record virtually nothing from Severus,<sup>20</sup> while the catenae on the Catholic Epistles are re-

<sup>17</sup> See n.29 below.

<sup>18</sup> For a survey of the editions of catenae printed down to his day see Robert Devreesse, "Chaînes exégétiques grecques," *Dictionnaire de la Bible* Suppl. 1 (Paris 1928) 1084–1233, discussed below. See also Karl Staab, *Die Pauluskatenen nach den handschriftlichen Quellen untersucht* (Rome 1926) 3, on the problems with these editions.

<sup>19</sup> Staab, *Pauluskatenen*, and "Die griechischen Katenenkommentare zu den Katholischen Briefen," *Biblica* 5 (1924) 296–353, with the summarizing review by James Hardy Ropes, "The Greek Catena to the Catholic Epistles," *HThR* 19 (1926) 383–388. According to Staab, the catena on the Catholic Epistles was first produced in that format around the turn of the seventh/eighth century. This catena was largely based on a commentary probably written in the sixth century that drew heavily on citations from Severus.

<sup>20</sup> Devreesse, in *Dictionnaire* 1223, points out that there are but six comments attributed to Severus in all the known manuscripts of the catenae on the Pauline epistles, and all six are only on Romans and only appear in one manuscript, *Vat.* 762 from the tenth century. See Staab, *Pauluskatenen* 7–11, for his evaluation of this manuscript as the earliest and most faithful representative of one type of the catena tradition on the Pauline letters, but see also 24, where he reduces the number of scholia from Severus in *Vat.* 762 to two. Given this data, it is surprising that Françoise Petit, *La chaîne sur l'Exode I* (Louvain 1999) xii, states that Severus has been incorporated into the catenae on all the books of the Old and New Testaments. But it should be borne in mind that in the catena tradition names were normally written in abbreviation so there was often confusion between Severus of Antioch, Severian of Gabala, and Eusebius of Caesarea. See Robert Devreesse, *Les anciens commentateurs grecs de l'Octateuque et des Rois* (Vatican City 1959) 186; F.

plete with citations from his works. With the exception of John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, Severus is quoted in the catenae on the Catholic Epistles more than any other church father.<sup>21</sup> I will come back to this point below.

Turning to the Old Testament, Françoise Petit's work over the past few decades on the catenae on Genesis through Kings has considerably advanced scholarship. She provided critical editions of these texts and reconstructed their history. According to Petit, there were initially several different catena branches on Genesis-Kings. Not all of them included material from Severus. The branch of the tradition that did come to include material from Severus was initially produced in the mid-to-late fifth century. At a subsequent stage, probably soon after Severus' death (538), this branch was expanded to include a host of scholia culled from the works of Severus.<sup>22</sup> Petit was confident enough of this reconstruction to publish the two layers of text separately.<sup>23</sup>

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Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse I* (Louvain 1991) xvi, and *Sévère d'Antioche: Fragments grecs tirés des chaînes sur les derniers livres de l'Octateuque et sur les Règles* (Louvain 2006) xii. See also CPG 7080 (16).

<sup>21</sup> Staab, *Biblica* 5 (1924) 307, counts 50 scholia for Chrysostom and 38 apiece for Cyril and Severus. Theodoret, by contrast, has eight scholia, Basil nine, and Athanasius only two. Apart from Chrysostom, Cyril, and Severus, no author has more than nine scholia.

<sup>22</sup> Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse I* xxi–xxv and the useful stemma at xxxvii; *La chaîne sur l'Exode I* xi–xiv, II xiii. Petit's reasoning for this dating is that Severus is the latest author to be incorporated into this branch of the tradition, and the works cited from him span his entire career. On the basis of his thorough study of the Greek fragments of Severus on a selection of 19 psalms, Dorival, in *ANTIΛΩPON* 120–121, surmises that by the late sixth century the Greek originals of Severus' works were known mostly only through florilegia and catenae. But he believes that some of the homilies and letters continued to be known independently past the sixth century and, in some cases, later. Van Rompay, *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 8 (2008) 6–7, provides important evidence for this from the ongoing Syriac translations from Greek originals of Severus' writings until as late as the eighth century.

<sup>23</sup> Petit, *Sévère d'Antioche* xi and n.4. Petit followed this procedure for

Having briefly reviewed the material, we may now return to our original question. Given the Byzantine churchmen's anathematization of Severus' theology and given their crowning emperor's ban on his writings, why and how were citations from Severus so extensively preserved so in the Byzantine exegetical catenae?

Almost a century ago, Robert Devreesse approached the question as follows:<sup>24</sup>

Does there exist a [catena] collection which excludes heretical or suspect authors, such as Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia, to say nothing of Eusebius, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Severus of Antioch and Diodorus of Tarsus? We know of none which excludes authors because of their affiliations ... Our authors call St. John Chrysostom "our very holy Father," but we find the same epithet sometimes attached to the name of Severus of Antioch. Orthodoxy was of so little concern to the catenists that it is thanks to them that we still possess something, even much, of the work of the suspect and the condemned. One could cite as the motto of our catenae the words from Cyril's letter to Eulogius: "heretics sometimes have some good."<sup>25</sup> Very few of the catenists apologize, as does the author of the catena on the Major Prophets for having drawn on the 'heterodox': they merely take from what they find.

Echoing a theme already highlighted in studies on the catenae before him, and subsequently reechoed in later work, De-

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Exodus and Leviticus-Judges, as well as 1-4 Kings : *La chaîne sur l'Exode* xi, where she states she would have done the same for Genesis had it occurred to her at the time of her work on that earlier publication.

<sup>24</sup> Devreesse, in *Dictionnaire* 1093.

<sup>25</sup> Cyril *Ep.* 44.1 (*ACO* 1.1.4 35). The appeal to this proof-text from Cyril was in fact explicitly invoked in the introductions to several catenae. J. Harold Greenlee, "The Catena of Codex Zacynthius," *Biblica* 40 (1959) 992-1001, at 999 n.1, cites it from the introduction to a palimpsest catena on Luke, commonly dated to sometime after the sixth century. The same citation is found in the introduction to the catena on Isaiah thought to have been compiled in the seventh or eighth century. See the similar citations in Staab, *Pauluskatenen* 2 n.1 and Dorival, in *ANTIΔΩΡON* 119.

vreesse appeals to the ecumenical nature of the Greek catenae in order to explain why its authors included material from so many figures the Byzantine Church deemed heretical.<sup>26</sup> It was not that the catenists did not consider Severus a heretic; they did. But when it came to biblical interpretation in the selective format of the catena, the catena creators lowered their theological guard and accepted wisdom from all corners. The genre itself encouraged inclusivity.

Elsewhere, Devreesse appeals to the same ecumenicity in order to explain the catenae's striking accuracy. When checked against the independent manuscript tradition, there is, as a rule, a very close match between the catenae and the sources from which they draw. Devreesse attributes this to the catenists' "liberal spirit":<sup>27</sup>

Our compilers select and truncate their sources, but they do not manipulate them. The reason for this is simple: they do not belong to any theological school and they have no polemical concerns. They are equally welcoming to Theodore of Mopsuestia and to Apollinarius

Devreesse's answer to our question is helpful. The particular cultural role of the catena in Byzantine society and its unique literary format played an essential part in the preservation in Greek of numerous passages from writers the Byzantines deemed heretical. Perhaps in the cases of the other "suspect and heretical" authors in Devreesse's list—Origen, Eusebius,

<sup>26</sup> For a predecessor see Joseph Deconinck, *Essai sur la chaîne de l'Octateuque* (Paris 1912) 13–16 (cited by Kugener and Triffaux, *Les Homiliae* 768, 773). For subsequent studies see Dorival, in *ANTIΔΩΡON* 119–120 ("le genre caténel est indifférent à la notion d'orthodoxie"); Françoise Petit, "La chaîne grecque sur la Genèse, miroir de l'exégèse ancienne," in G. Schöllgen and C. Scholten (eds.), *Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum: Festschrift Ernst Dassmann* (Münster 1996) 243–253, at 243–244. See further Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Procopius of Gaza and his Library," in H. Amirav and B. ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron* (Leuven 2007) 173–190, discussed below.

<sup>27</sup> Devreesse, *Les anciens commentateurs* viii.

Theodore, Diodorus, and Apollinarius—this is all we need. In Severus' case, however, there are some further complications that make Devreesse's answer inadequate as it stands. In what follows I will present these complications, attempt to offer a historical resolution of the problem, and then circle back to propose an updated version of Devreesse's explanation. For convenience's sake, I will be calling Devreesse's proposal "the ecumenical solution."

The first difficulty with accepting the ecumenical solution in its present form is the issue with which we began: Justinian's decree. According to Petit's reconstruction, it was during the sixth century, after Severus' death in 538, that the material from his oeuvre was incorporated into the already extant catena on Genesis through Kings. How did the people responsible for this massive editorial makeover have access to Severus' works given Justinian's ban against their dissemination? Are we to deduce that despite the ban, Severus' works continued to circulate freely enough for the sixth-century editors of this catena to have access to his many homilies, letters, and theological tracts which they cite? Given what we know about the varying degrees of availability of manuscripts and the uneven rates of dissemination and implementation of Roman legislation it is quite reasonable to assume that Justinian's ban was not universally enforced.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Thus we do not need to conclude from the fact that Eustathius' *Epistle on Two Natures against Severus* cites amply from Severus' writings that it dates to before Justinian's 536 ban, as we find in Eduard Schwartz, *Drei dogmatische Schriften Justinians* (Munich 1939) 113–114. But also we must not assume that Justinian's ban was for rhetorical purposes alone. In all likelihood it was implemented gradually and to varying degrees across the empire. On this question in general see Jill Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 1999) 77–98, and, under Justinian in particular, Caroline Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian," in Michael Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge 2005) 161–184. See further nn.3 and 22 above. See also Kugener, *Les Homiliae* 768, who deduces from the fact that copies of Severus' works had to be brought from Rome to the Council in Trullo (681) that his works, although still copied in Greek,

Yet this is not only a practical question of how the editors had access to Severus' works; it is also an ideological question. It is one thing to leave Christological polemics aside for the sake of liberal-minded exegesis. But is it worth running the risk of amputation to do so, as Justinian threatened? What scribe would want to risk his limb and his livelihood solely in the name of ecumenical inclusivity?

This is the first problem with the ecumenical solution. Devreesse could not have realized this problem, as he wrote before Petit had concluded that the Severan material was incorporated into the catenae soon after Severus' death, and thus soon after Justinian's decree. The second problem with the ecumenical solution is that it is belied by evidence Devreesse himself cites. In many of the surviving catenae, Severus' scholia are introduced by the following formula (or some variation thereof): "from the most holy Severus, bishop of Antioch."<sup>29</sup> If the scribe in these cases was a Byzantine Chalcedonian who viewed Severus as a heretic but only deigned to incorporate selections from his work due to exegetical ecumenicism, why would he label Severus a saint? Why would he make a point of identifying Severus as the patriarch of Antioch, given that Severus' six years in that post were considered an embarrassment to the imperial church?<sup>30</sup> If it were only ecumenical

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were by that time becoming scarce in the Byzantine realm.

<sup>29</sup> Devreesse, in *Dictionnaire* 1151, describing the catena on Isaiah, states that most of the 97 scholia attributed to Severus are introduced with the words τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου Σευήρου. For further examples see J. A. Cramer, *Catena graecorum Patrum in Novum Testamentum* III (Oxford 1844) 47 (on Acts 2:28), τοῦ ἁγίου Σευήρου Ἀντιοχείας; 43 (on Acts 2:24), τοῦ ἁγίου Σευήρου Ἐπισκόπου Ἀντιοχείας. See also Johann Christoph Wolf, *Anecdota graeca* III (Hamburg 1722) 117–128, which provides a list of comments culled from various writings of Severus, and introduced by the words τοῦ ἁγίου Σευήρου Ἐπισκόπου Ἀντιοχείας. This catena, taken from the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> cent. MS *Oxford, New College* 58 (also the source of Cramer's text) is packed with excerpts from Severus. See further the discussion of Severus' epithets in Staab, *Biblica* 5 (1924) 321, and Greenlee, *Biblica* 40 (1959) 997.

<sup>30</sup> The decree of Menas of Constantinople's home synod (n.2 above) ac-

considerations that were at play here, why does the Byzantine author make a point of touting Severus' credentials?

This problem with the ecumenical solution is compounded when we delve further into the details of Severus' incorporation into the catenae. In the catenae on several biblical books, scholia from Severus occupy a disproportionately large place in comparison with other authors. We have already mentioned the overwhelming presence of Severus in the catena on the Catholic Epistles. We see a similar picture in Genesis through Kings, in Isaiah, in the Gospels, and in Acts.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps more significantly, Severus' presence is not only quantitatively different from most of the other authors cited by his side: there is also an important qualitative difference. The scholia introduced in the name of Severus differ from much of the citations from other authors in that they are regularly provided with a reference to where in Severus' oeuvre they were taken from:<sup>32</sup> "from the Treatise against Julian,"<sup>33</sup> "from the

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cuses Severus of grossly abusing his episcopal power, by performing, among other things, unlawful baptisms: Mansi VIII 1142B. See Devreese, in *Dictionnaire* 1151, where he attempts to deal with this problem. From the anti-Chalcedonian perspective, Severus did not serve only six years as the patriarch of Antioch. His followers continued to consider him the lawful patriarch even throughout his years of exile, until his death. See on this point Edward Watts, "Winning the Intracommunal Dialogues: Zacharias Scholasticus' *Life of Severus*," *JECs* 13 (2005) 437–464, at 461 n.99.

<sup>31</sup> See Devreese, *Les anciens commentateurs* vii and 186, and in *Dictionnaire* 1151, 1209.

<sup>32</sup> Petit, in *Stimuli* 243 n.6, asserts that this is true of most, though not all, citations from Severus. The editions of Severus' scholia show that this was true of Genesis and, to a lesser degree, Exodus, but in the citations from Severus on the rest of the Octateuch and Kings references to locations in Severus' work are in fact never provided. In the catena on the Catholic Epistles there is another special characteristic of the Severus scholia: they are frequently introduced by the words καὶ μετ' ὀλίγα, which also seems to imply special concern for the source of the citation. See Staab, *Biblica* 5 (1924) 348.

<sup>33</sup> Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse* I 278 (scholion 429), 121 (scholion 166), 274 (scholion 419) citing Severus' treatise *Against Julian's Additions*. On this work

letter to Caesarea,”<sup>34</sup> “from the 109<sup>th</sup> Homily,”<sup>35</sup> etc. Only rarely do we find sourcing of this type applied to other authors. This unusual practice requires a historical explanation.<sup>36</sup> It seems unlikely that the Chalcedonian Byzantine editor would take such pains to cite the precise references from this ‘heresiarch’ just in the name of ecumenical accommodation.

Thus there are three difficulties with the idea that Severus found a home in the Byzantine catenae solely because of the ecumenical nature of the genre. First, unless we assume that Justinian’s decree against the writings of Severus was purely rhetorical, it appears unlikely that Byzantine scribes would put themselves at risk of corporal punishment just for the sake of ecumenical exegesis. Second, why would these Byzantine scribes proclaim Severus as bishop and saint, if they considered him a heretic whose elevation to the patriarchate was a travesty? Third, why would these scribes make a point of meticulously citing the sources for Severus’ scholia, if all they were after was the contents of his biblical interpretation?

I propose one answer to these three questions that still makes use of Devreesse’s ecumenical solution, but with one key modification. Rather than saying that Severus was incorporated into the catena by liberally-minded Chalcedonian editors, I propose that this massive project was in fact the work of *anti-*

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see Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies* 24–25.

<sup>34</sup> Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse* I 120 (scholion 165).

<sup>35</sup> Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse* IV 250 (scholion 1932); *La chaîne sur l’Exode* I 8 (scholion 83), 12 (scholion 98), 14 (scholion 106).

<sup>36</sup> See Petit, in *Stimuli* 243 n.6, postulating that the reason for this was that these citations were taken at ‘second hand’: the catenist borrowed these fragments not from the works themselves, but from an extant dossier organized around a dogmatic theme. This theory would fit well with the ecumenical solution, for it means that in practice Chalcedonian editors drew on a distinctly anti-Chalcedonian dogmatic source to enrich their exegetical catenae. Compare this theory with Staab, *Biblica* 5 (1924) 328–329, postulating that the initial editor of the catena on the Catholic Epistles was himself a follower of Severus.

Chalcedonian editors. Fearing, after Justinian's novella of 536, that their master's works faced extinction, Severus' adherents attempted to save what they could by incorporating selections from the corpus into an already existing framework. It is possible that they operated in Egypt, where much of the early work on the catenae is thought by some scholars to have taken place,<sup>37</sup> and where imperial persecution of anti-Chalcedonians had historically been less severe.<sup>38</sup> These anti-Chalcedonian scribes took advantage of the catena genre to save scattered portions of their master's oeuvre.<sup>39</sup> Alongside continuing to attempt to preserve Severus' works in their complete form, they took the precaution of incorporating any statement of Severus' that had any bearing on a biblical verse into the already existing biblical catenae.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See Kathleen McNamee, "Missing Links in the Development of Scholia," *GRBS* 36 (1995) 399–414. By contrast, Dorival, in *ANTIΔΩΡΩΝ* 120, and Van Rompay, *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 8 (2008) 6, prefer Syria, Palestine, and Constantinople over Egypt for the geographical setting of these catenae. Without entering into the respective arguments for the different locations, we may say that while accepting Dorival and Van Rompay's theory does not adversely affect my proposal, Egypt would have provided a quieter, and maybe therefore likelier, setting for the execution of this anti-Chalcedonian project.

<sup>38</sup> This was true of Justin's reign and the initial years of Justinian's. Egypt's immunity from Chalcedonian persecution was what led Severus and his fellow anti-Chalcedonian bishops to flee there in the first place. It was, nevertheless, precisely after Justinian's condemnation of Severus in 536 that this situation began to change. See W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge 1972) 241, 273–274; Leslie S. B. MacCoull, "When Justinian Was Upsetting the World: A Note on Soldiers and Religious Coercion in Sixth-Century Egypt," in T. S. Miller and J. Nesbitt (eds.), *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis* (Washington 1995) 106–113, at 110.

<sup>39</sup> It should be stressed that this project was not about preserving Severus' anti-Chalcedonian theology. Since Justinian's decree was against all writings of Severus, writings of exegetical content faced the same threat of extinction as his dogmatic texts. See further nn.41 and 43 below.

<sup>40</sup> Devreesse, in *Dictionnaire* 1203–1204, 1209, seems to be making a similar claim with reference to the scholia on Acts in the name of Severus and

This explains why Severus is often cited with approbation and why efforts were taken to record the precise sources of his comments. According to this theory, it would have been dedicated partisans, anxious of losing their master's precious words—not dispassionate academic scholars—who first incorporated the Severan material into the catenae.<sup>41</sup>

Yet they were able to do so, precisely because of the ecumenical character of the genre highlighted by Devreesse. Because the earlier catenists had already paved the way in drawing on previous 'heretical' sources, there was room for the reception of contemporary 'heretics' as well. And precisely for this reason, Severus, although first introduced into the catenae by anti-Chalcedonians, was allowed to stay by the Chalcedonian scribes who later copied and recopied the catenae manuscripts during a time that was sufficiently removed from Justinian's novella.<sup>42</sup>

However, given the fact that Severus does not in fact survive in all branches of the catena tradition, it stands to reason that the Byzantine tradition was not uniformly and completely comfortable with his presence. We might speculate that this is the reason why Severus is absent from the Pauline epistles. In light

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Ammonius, whom Devreesse identifies as Severus' follower.

<sup>41</sup> Thus we need not go so far as to claim that these catenae were compiled in the first place with dogmatic concerns in mind, as Marcel Richard argued with reference to an early catena on Psalms: "Les premières chaînes sur le Psautier," *Opera Minora* III (Tunhout/Leuven 1977) no. 70. See the objections to this position by Dorival, in *ANTIΔΩΡON* 117–119; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* II.1 (Atlanta 1987) 87–88; Van Rompay, *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 8 (2008) 6. It is in fact possible, judging from the fragments I have read, that they were chosen precisely for their *non-dogmatic* content.

<sup>42</sup> It was not then the case, as Devreesse, *Les anciens commentateurs* vii, writes, that Severus was incorporated into the catenae merely because he was "the most prominent churchman of the age," but as Petit, *La chaîne sur l'Exode* I xii n.6, asserts, elliptically hinting at the idea here presented, that the incorporation of Severus was the result of "a massive and deliberate insertion, far removed from the redaction of the ancient catenae."

of the centrality of these epistles in Christological debates, perhaps the Byzantine scribes who were willing to tolerate Severus in many other, less theologically charged parts of the Bible, considered his presence in Paul's letters too dangerous to maintain.

Having shifted, in the case of Severus, the weight of Devresse's comments about the ecumenicity of the catenae, from the editors to the scribes, the question still remains: why would this have been the case? Considering the strong partisan spirit of so much of early Christianity, and in light of the fierce theological battles that characterized the fifth and sixth centuries, why in fact were the catenae so ecumenical?<sup>43</sup>

There were in all likelihood many factors that contributed to this state of affairs. In his study of Procopius of Gaza's Old Testament commentary—a work that draws heavily on the catena tradition—Bas ter Haar Romeny wrote:<sup>44</sup>

If one considers the list of authors just given, it seems that the different schools of exegesis were treated equally, and that doctrinal issues played no role: Antiochene exegetes such as

<sup>43</sup> Even if Severus had been incorporated in the first place by anti-Chalcedonians, subsequent Chalcedonian scribes did not need to retain him. They could have either cut out his scholia from the catenae, or, more simply, preserved his comments but erased his name. The initial editor of the catena in the Zacynthius palimpsest (n.25 above) thought that this was in fact what happened in that palimpsest: Greenlee, *Biblica* 40 (1959) 999. But as Greenlee observed, this was not the case. We do, however, find the erasure of Severus' name in the introductions to many of the citations from his works in *British Library Add.* 12,155, a Syriac dogmatic florilegium from the seventh or eighth century: Wright, *Catalogue* II 923 n. Wright (II 921 and 955) offers the eighth-century date. For a seventh-century dating see Michel Breydy, "Vestiges méconnus des pères cappadociens en syriaque: Deux fragments oubliés de la Profession de foi d'Amphiloque," *POr* 11 (1983) 349–361, at 356 n.21.

<sup>44</sup> Romeny, in *From Rome to Constantinople* 189. Earlier scholarship had thought that Procopius was the initiator of the catena genre. This has been disproved by Petit: see, in brief, *Stimuli* 244. Yet, even if Procopius did not invent the genre, he undoubtedly played an important role in the initial stages of its popularization.

Eusebius of Emesa, Diodore, and Theodore are presented besides Alexandrians such as Origen, Didymus, and Cyril, and this at a time when Origen had already fallen from favour ... *Du choc des opinions jaillit la vérité?* In general I would contend that the catenists and Procopius were more discerning ... The catenists and Procopius were mostly interested in the solution of problems and questions posed by the text: they wanted to present an *instrument d'étude* that would serve a grammatical and historical explanation of the text. There is hardly room for the philosophical, spiritual, and doctrinal here.

While Romeny's proposal works nicely for Procopius,<sup>45</sup> we cannot apply it to the catenae that incorporated the works of Severus. Although some of Severus' comments can be classified as being concerned with what might be called the "grammatical and historical explanation of the text,"<sup>46</sup> most are of an allegorical, symbolic, and moral nature.<sup>47</sup> Often the allegorical interpretations from the pen of Severus are cited alongside more "grammatical and historical" explanations from people like Theodore of Mopsuestia, Eusebius of Emesa, and John Chrysostom.<sup>48</sup> Thus the inclusivity in evidence in these catenae cuts in fact deeper than it does in Procopius.

<sup>45</sup> See Marc Hirshman, "The Greek Fathers and the Aggada on Ecclesiastes: Formats of Exegesis in Late Antiquity," *HebrUCA* 59 (1988) 137–165, at 152–155, for a similar judgment (not cited by Romeny) regarding Procopius' catena on Ecclesiastes.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Petit, *Sévère d'Antioche* 18–21 (scholion 14 on Num 5:6–7), 20–23 (scholion 19 on Num 8:25–26), 24–25 (scholion 22 on Num 10:29), 30–31 (scholion 30 on Num 19:6), 46–47 (scholion 51 on Deut 5.9–10), 52–53 (scholion 56 on Deut 10:22), 136–137 (scholion 48 on 1 Kings 12:28).

<sup>47</sup> See Petit, *La chaîne sur l'Exode* I xxvii.

<sup>48</sup> Approaching late antique exegesis through these categories of "allegorical" and "historical," as they are known to us from the medieval "senses of scripture" is methodologically problematic, as pointed out by Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge 1997) 186–214. Not only are these categories problematic on their own terms, they are furthermore unhelpful in our attempts to understand the catenae's inclusive character.

An example from Petit's edition of the catena on Genesis 1–3 can help illustrate the point. The concluding verse of Genesis 3 speaks of cherubim and a flaming, revolving sword, which were placed at the east of Eden to prevent reentrance into the garden. The nature and precise purpose of these beings has long occupied the minds of biblical interpreters.

The Byzantine catena on this verse comprises no fewer than 17 scholia.<sup>49</sup> Eleven can be described as being concerned with grammatical-historical matters. These scholia, culled from the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Eusebius of Emesa, John Chrysostom, and Severian of Gabala, explain the ethical purpose and narrative logic of the expulsion from Paradise, and they offer etymological and 'practical' interpretations of the cherubim and the fiery sword.<sup>50</sup>

The other six scholia, taken from Origen, Basil, Didymus the Blind, and Severus, provide allegorical and liturgical interpretations of the cherubim and the fiery sword.<sup>51</sup> As representatives of these two types of exegesis, we may cite Theodore and Severus' respective comments on the fiery sword. The scholion from Theodore reads:<sup>52</sup>

From Theodore. The "fiery sword" (φλογίνη ῥομφαία) indicates a terrifying fire, flashing as with lightning, stretched out in the form of a sword, which was of a frightening appearance to whoever saw it, both by its nature and by its visible form. And [the verse] states that it was "turning" to indicate that it gleamed with constant movement, causing yet greater fear for the viewer.

This comment can indeed be said to be catering to the "grammatical and historical explanation of the text." Theodore

<sup>49</sup> Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse* I 297–305 (scholia 462–478).

<sup>50</sup> I 297–301 (scholia 462–469), 302 (scholion 473), 304–305 (scholia 477–478).

<sup>51</sup> I 301–302 (scholia 470–472), 303–304 (scholia 474–476).

<sup>52</sup> From MS. *Moscow Vladimir* 28; Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse* I 304–305 (scholion 477). A Syriac version of this passage can be found in Raymond M. Tonneau, "Théodore de Mopsueste. Interprétation (du Livre) de la Genèse (Wat. Syr. 120, ff. I–V)," *Le Muséon* 66 (1953) 45–64, at 56.

unpacks in a physical, realistic manner his understanding of the expression “fiery sword.” It was in fact no sword at all, but fire in the form of a sword. This fiery apparition did not in fact turn, since fire does not literally revolve, but its flashing made it look like it was constantly moving. Theodore further explains that the purpose of this whole sight was to instill fear in the beholder, so as to keep him or her away from Paradise.

When we turn to the comment cited from Severus, we find a very different type of explanation:<sup>53</sup>

From Severus, from the 31<sup>st</sup> Homily. The fiery and turning sword refers to the predictions of the prophets, which have enigmatically shown us the way of the cross, and have preserved for us the things of the present age. For the prophetic word truly and without any other comparison appears to me like a fiery sword—for it [the prophetic word] both gleams like fire and cuts better than a sharpened sword, as stated by the prophet Jeremiah.<sup>54</sup>

And a little later. This fiery sword is the prophet’s tongue, which ceaselessly moved and turned and announced in advance the coming of Christ in the flesh. The Emmanuel both established this [fiery sword/tongue] and put it to rest, entering into Paradise at that time when he led the thief in with him.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> From MS. *Moscow Vladimir* 28; Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse* 301–302 (scholion 471). For the Syriac text of the complete homily, see *PO* 36.640–665, at 646–648 (Jer 23:29 is cited there in full).

<sup>54</sup> Jer 23:29: “Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?” Interestingly enough, it is from this verse that rabbinic sources at around the time of Severus derive the notion of midrashic polysemy shared by the ‘ecumenical’ attitude of the catenae. See *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 34a: “‘Like a hammer which breaks a rock’—just as a hammer splits the rock into numerous pieces, so does scripture split into numerous interpretations.” This source is frequently cited in modern discussions of rabbinic polysemy; see e.g. David Stern, “Anthology and Polysemy in Classical Midrash,” in *The Anthology in Jewish Literature* (Oxford 2004) 108–142, at 123. For more on possible connections between the catenae and the late antique midrashic compilations see n.69 below.

<sup>55</sup> See Lk 23:43.

This is anything but a “grammatical and historical explanation” of the type we find in Procopius and studied by Romeny. The people who chose to first include, and then retain, this comment of Severus’ (and many others besides) cannot be said to have been simply interested in providing an “instrument d’étude” for the biblical text. The “fiery sword” for Severus had little to do with actual fire or real swords. For Severus the expression symbolically pointed to prophetic predictions and their role in salvation history.

If the uses of this genre extended beyond philological and historical aspects of the text, providing both historical and allegorical comments on virtually every verse in the Bible, what was its purpose?

I propose we turn to Severus himself as a guide. While Severus naturally did not play a role in the inclusion of his own writings in the catenae, he was at the frontline of biblical interpretation at the time around the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries when the catena genre was first taking shape. Severus’ exegetical ideology, as far as it can be ascertained from his writings, can provide some indication of the overall exegetical attitude of his time.

When it came to theological matters, Severus was a purist. Orthodoxy meant to him, as it seems to have done to almost all Christians of late antiquity, one singular, precise answer. Theological truth was univalent and uncompromising.<sup>56</sup> The difference between saying that Christ was “out of” (ἐκ) two natures and “in” (ἐν) two natures, while seemingly hinging on one small, trivial letter, made all the difference in the world.<sup>57</sup> It was a difference worth dedicating one’s life to; it was a

<sup>56</sup> See e.g. Severus’ *Cathedral Homily* 21 (*PO* 37.80–81), where he instructs his congregation to anathematize those who maintain the Chalcedonian Christological definition and “those who by these opinions make our salvation false or imperfect.”

<sup>57</sup> Already in antiquity there was frustration about the apparent triviality of the one-letter difference between the parties: Evagr. *HE* 1.1 and 5.2 (ed. Sabbah 98–101, 264–265).

difference worth spending twenty years in hiding and exile for—as Severus did.<sup>58</sup>

But when it came to matters of biblical exegesis, Severus was anything but a purist. Rather than seeking to find the one correct interpretation of a verse, he reveled in multiplicity. In one of his catechetical homilies, in fact, he explicitly pits the preciseness of theology against the polysemy of biblical homiletics:<sup>59</sup>

I know that I must preach the very same trinity [as I have in the past], and I am convinced that I must unite it with the very same dogmas [as in my past homilies], in terms that are more precise than the subtleties of geometry. Nevertheless, I am unable [to decide] from where to begin my preaching. For the audience does not wish your homily to consist of one or two themes of which you have already spoken; rather [they wish that it be composed] abundantly, *from all those many findings and interpretations of the divinely-inspired scripture, as a sea abounding with your grace.*

The sea-like abundance of biblical interpretation and the need for its constant renewal are evident throughout Severus' homilies.<sup>60</sup> Many of these begin by interpreting a verse, or a passage along literal, historical lines and then move on to expounding its allegorical significance.<sup>61</sup> In some cases Severus seizes on the

<sup>58</sup> See Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement* 4–7, for one explanation of the deeper logic underpinning the differences between supporters and opponents of Chalcedon. For an explanation of the underlying logic of another, some would say even subtler, Christological debate Severus was involved in, with Julian of Halicarnassus on the incorruptibility of the body of Christ, see Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies* 73–76, 101–105, 141–146.

<sup>59</sup> *Cathedral Homily* 109 (PO 25.736).

<sup>60</sup> Multiplicity of interpretation is discussed below. For the theme of renewal in Severus see *Cathedral Homily* 116 (PO 26.323), 85 (PO 23.25). It should be noted at the outset that many of the characteristics I attribute to the “exegetical attitude of Severus' time” were inherited from prior stages of Christian biblical exegesis, dating back to Origen and earlier.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. *Cathedral Homily* 119 (PO 26.375–430), where Severus begins with a long, more or less ‘straightforward’ interpretation of the miracle at Cana (Jn

diverse textual tradition of a verse, subjecting the Septuagint and the other ancient Greek translations to competing interpretations.<sup>62</sup>

The Antiochene homilist was fully aware of the multiple and contradictory nature of biblical interpretation. In the course of his 89<sup>th</sup> homily he offers an allegorical reading of Luke's parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>63</sup> In a move shared by other exegetes before him, Severus interprets the Samaritan as Christ himself.<sup>64</sup> This, he argues, accords well with the Hebrew etymology of the word "Samaritan" since it comes from the verb *shomer*, meaning to guard, and who, he asks, is more of a guardian than Christ?<sup>65</sup> Yet, Severus then pauses to ask, does not the book of Kings tell us that Samaritans are named after

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2:1–11) before launching into an extended allegorical interpretation, which he explicitly marks as such (*PO* 26.388).

<sup>62</sup> E.g. *Cathedral Homily* 93 (*PO* 25.47–48), with reference to Is 19:19–20, 23.

<sup>63</sup> *Cathedral Homily* 89 (*PO* 23.100–119), on Lk 10:30–37.

<sup>64</sup> See M. Rauer et al., *Origène: Homélies sur S. Luc*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1998), *Homily* 34, at 400–411; fr.71, at 520–521. See 403 n.1 for references to similar, allegorical interpretations of this parable prior to and after Origen.

<sup>65</sup> Also on other occasions Severus bases his explanations on Hebrew etymologies. See e.g. *Cathedral Homilies* 24 (*PO* 37.140–141), discussing "Bosra" in Is 63:1; 25 (*PO* 37.150–151), discussing the Hebrew word for Passover; 77 (*PO* 16.804) on "Sabbath" in the sense of "week"; 84 (*PO* 23.19) on the Hebrew for Jubilee; 90 (*PO* 23.125) on "cherub"; 101 (*PO* 22.264–265), etymological explanations of various Hebrew names; 104 (*PO* 24.629) on Pharisees. It is not likely that Severus knew Hebrew, or any other Semitic language. This is proven by his misrepresentation of certain words (he thinks the Hebrew word for Passover is *phaseq*) and his ignorance of basic features of Semitic (at *Cathedral Homily* 92, *PO* 25.41, he speaks of the "scriptural usage" of "son of X" to attribute quality X to someone, without indication of any awareness that this is a common feature of Hebrew and Syriac). Research into some of Severus' Hebrew etymologies shows that he has derived them from earlier patristic sources. His explanation of "Bosra," for example, is found in Origen, *Commentary on Psalms*, on Ps 16:9. His observation about "Sabbath" in the sense of "week" can be traced back to Eusebius, *Problems and Solutions concerning the Gospels* 2.2 (*PG* 22.941).

their eponymous ancestor Shemer?<sup>66</sup> To this he responds:<sup>67</sup>

Since, however, we are concerning ourselves with the meaning of the name which suits the interpretation we presented before, let us not inquire about the alternative signification, namely the reason why this appellation came about. For each one of these [meanings] has something which is both convincing and truthful.

When it comes to biblical interpretation, truth can be found in many different places.<sup>68</sup>

A commonly held, but simplistic conception of late antique Christianity is that it was a culture obsessed with theological exclusivity. We must not forget, however, that this culture was equally fascinated with exegetical inclusivity. A fundamental appreciation of scripture's "sea-like abundance" is, in the final reckoning, what underlay the ecumenical character of the catena project and what facilitated much of Severus' preservation in Greek.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> 1 Kings 16.24. For possible patristic and rabbinic sources of, or parallels to, Severus' discussion of the etymological origins of the name of the Samaritans, see Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism* (Tübingen 2002) 123.

<sup>67</sup> *Cathedral Homily* 89 (PO 23.110).

<sup>68</sup> For further examples of Severus providing more than one interpretation for a given verse see *Cathedral Homily* 23 (PO 37.126–127), "Having proposed this double exegesis, let us not belittle one of the two, for both of them are worthy of God"; *Cathedral Homily* 39 (PO 36.510–511), "We accept these two explanations ... for these words of the spirit have been understood in many ways, due to the abundance of divine meanings"; *Cathedral Homily* 121 (PO 29.98–99), "One may find here yet another, more profound meaning..."

<sup>69</sup> See Staab, *Biblica* 5 (1924) 351, who speaks of the catenae's embodiment of unity in multiplicity. In this sense, these more inclusive catenae that incorporate a wider range of biblical exegesis than what we find in Procopius might be said to be more similar to the 'encyclopedic' character of the rabbinic midrashic compilations, which, in the words of Hirshman, *HebrUCA* 59 (1988) 164, "go out of [their] way to be as inclusive and exhaustive as possible." While Hirshman proposed that the initial purpose of these compilations was educational, more recently David Stern, in *The*

The object of this paper was to account for Severus' survival in Greek. My suggestion was, in a nutshell, that this was a two-fold process. Severus' anti-Chalcedonian followers preserved much of their leader's texts by incorporating them piecemeal in the catenae. The Chalcedonian Church was able to tolerate their presence by severing, as it were, the biblical exegete in Severus from the theologian. With regard to the one theological 'Truth' Severus was considered a heresiarch, but when it came to the multifold 'truths' of biblical interpretation he was the most holy of bishops.<sup>70</sup>

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*Anthology in Jewish Literature* 125–129, made the case that they originally served as source books for preachers. Since the purpose of my paper was to explore the logic of Severus' survival in Greek I did not directly tackle the origin and function of the exegetical catenae. However, further work should be done on this question, taking into account these recent studies on the midrashic anthologies more or less contemporary with the catenae.

<sup>70</sup> Thus, in contradistinction to earlier articulations of the ecumenical solution, I see the catena genre not as the cause for the inclusion of Severus but as one symptom of a broader facet of Byzantine culture.

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