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Nemesius of Emesa

Nemesius of Emesa, a bishop of a Roman city in the territory of Syria Libani. All information about Nemesius is derived from the treatise *Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου* (*De natura hominis, DNH*) and its complex transmission history. Although the date scholars give for the composition of the treatise vacillates between the late 4th cent., mid-5th cent., and the late 6th cent., it can be reasonably argued that the treatise was written in the first half of the fifth century, most likely in the period between the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon.

Recognized as the first anthropological compendium of Christian philosophy, *DNH* stands out from among patristic literature for its heavy dependence on Hellenic philosophy and medicine coupled with the somewhat superficial attention it gives to Scripture. Thus, according to Morani's count, the treatise contains about 70 citations of Galen, sometimes explicit, extensive and verbatim, while the references to the Bible are short, patchy, and applied as support for Nemesius' argument and never as its starting point (Morani: 139). It contains only 28 direct biblical quotations and allusions.

Most of the paradigmatic biblical allusions are concentrated in the first ten paragraphs of the treatise, where Nemesius creatively rethinks his sources and establishes his original anthropology, which nonetheless still retains a continuity with the Antiochene exegetic tradition. Thus, with reference to the Mosaic story of creation, Nemesius asserts that man was the last to be created because all creatures were made for his sake (§ 4). Telfer saw in this statement of Nemesius the influence of Philo's *On the creation*, known to Nemesius via Origen's *Com. on Gen.*, which he explicitly mentions in his treatise (Telfer: 235). Although Nemesius was clearly acquainted with these works, his interpretation of the Mosaic creation story echoes the doctrine of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who saw man as an apex and bond of creation (σύνδεσμος), which joined together mortal and immortal, visible and invisible into a whole and single unity. With reference to Moses, Nemesius claims that man is a 'εἰκὼν' and bond of the whole of creation and for that reason is correctly termed 'μικρὸς κόσμος'. Importantly, Nemesius viewed man as not simply a boundary between the different spheres (as was believed by Philo; Norris: 147) but as a functional joint manifesting organic continuity between them (described by Poseidonios; Skard: 30).

In the last 24 paragraphs of the treatise devoted to ethical issues, Nemesius applies biblical examples to elaborate his idea about the high dignity of man, manifested in his capacity of choice.

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