

**Seventh International Conference of  
Manichaean Studies  
Dublin 2009**

**Abstracts**

**The Physics of Light, Darkness and Matter in John the Grammarian's First  
Homily against the Manichaeans: Early Byzantine Anti-Manichaean  
Literature as a Window on Controversies in Later Neoplatonism**

Byard Bennett (Grand Rapids)

The first half of the sixth century A.D. witnessed a remarkable resurgence of interest in Manichaeism. This interest was initially stimulated by controversies associated with the rise of Monophysitism (and in particular the Aphthartodocetic controversy). Discussion of Manichaean teaching on the two principles (Light and Darkness) and the formation of the present world also allowed Greek anti-Manichaean writers to draw upon and contribute to discussions of certain disputed issues within later Neoplatonism. Most of these early sixth-century Greek anti-Manichaean writers appear to have pursued philosophical studies at Alexandria (having been taught or significantly influenced by the Neoplatonist Ammonius) and to have functioned at some time as teachers and practitioners of advanced studies (grammar, rhetoric and philosophy). This paper will analyze the two homilies attributed to John the Grammarian in ms. Vatopedinus 236 and edited by Marcel Richard in his edition of the works of John of Caesarea. It will show that for their information on Manichaeism the homilies are chiefly dependent upon Basil of Caesarea's second homily on the Hexaemeron and Theodore's *Haereticarum fabularum compendium*. Like the later works of John Philoponus, the homilies provide a nuanced critique of Aristotelian physics and certain aspects of later Neoplatonism that is shaped by the biblical narrative and the writings of the Cappadocian fathers. To help promote discussion, an English translation of John the Grammarian's First Homily against the Manichaeans will be made available to conference participants.