

**St Andrew's Patristic Symposium 2014**  
 "From Alexandria to Cappadocia and Back Again"  
 26 and 27 September 2014

**Keynote Speakers**

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Paul Blowers</b>	<b>Bronwen Neil</b>
<b>Title</b>	"Mystics and Mountains: Comparing Origen's Exegesis of the Transfiguration and Gregory of Nyssa's Exposition of the Sinai Theophany"	"Signs of <i>Theosis</i> in Synesius of Cyrene"
<b>Abstract</b>	Origen's interpretation of the Transfiguration of Christ on Mt Tabor proved to be crucially important for his larger Christology and understanding of the economy of salvation, while Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of the Sinai Theophany in Exodus was a key link in his apophatic theology and his understanding of human participation in the mystery of the triune God. This lecture will compare the two as models of "anagogical" and "mystical" exegesis in which the biblical text is envisioned as providing its own spiritual topography and strategy of elevation, with the living Logos himself as guide to sublime intimacy with God.	The germ of the idea of deification through contemplation of the divine ( <i>theosis</i> ) is found in Plato, who wrote of a divine spark in each human being that longs to return to the stars, whence it came. This idea was considerably developed by neo-Platonists, both Christian and non-Christian, in the third and fourth centuries. Synesius of Cyrene was a neo-Platonist long before he was made bishop of Ptolemais in the early 400s. Trained in Alexandria by Hypatia, the famous woman philosopher, Synesius found deification, becoming like God (or 'The God'), a useful concept in his tracts <i>On Dreams</i> and <i>On Dio</i> , both written before his ordination. I consider the origins and development of this concept in Synesius' neo-Platonist forebears, Plotinus and Porphyry, and its usage in Synesius' works. A comparison with the concept in the works of the Cappadocian Gregory of Nyssa will then be made.