



## When Did Leontius, Presbyter of Constantinople, Preach?

C. Datema

*Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 35, No. 4. (Dec., 1981), pp. 346-351.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0042-6032%28198112%2935%3A4%3C346%3AWDLPOC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B>

*Vigiliae Christianae* is currently published by Brill Academic Publishers.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/bap.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## WHEN DID LEONTIUS, PRESBYTER OF CONSTANTINOPLE, PREACH?

BY

C. DATEMA

### *Introduction.*

A homilist whose work until recently had received little attention is Leontius, presbyter of Constantinople. Although we find two of his homilies printed in PG 86,<sup>1</sup> he has scarcely been accorded a mention, except in reference works and in a single article. Aubineau has the honour of being the first among more recent scholars to highlight Leontius' place in homiletic literature. In 1972 he published in his *Homélie Pascales* two unedited paschal homilies of Leontius, provided with an extensive commentary and preceded by an instructive introduction based on material from the two paschal homilies and the two sermons in PG 86.<sup>2</sup> Aubineau comes to the conclusion that with Leontius we are indeed dealing with a presbyter of Constantinople, who probably lived in the sixth century, like a number of other writers of the same name. His situating Leontius in the sixth century stems partly from his supposition that in one of his homilies Leontius drew on an Easter Sermon of ps. Chrysostom (Aldama 237), which he dates to the fifth century on grounds of internal evidence and its use by Leontius. He characterises Leontius with the words: "ce pourrait être un compilateur de grand talent".<sup>3</sup> In an article written in collaboration with Pauline Allen I have shown that the relationship between ps. Chrysostom and Leontius is precisely the opposite, namely that it was Leontius who was copied by ps. Chrysostom.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this conclusion we lose some supporting evidence for the dating of Leontius' work.

In 1977 M. Sachot published an article concerning the homiletic works of Leontius, in which he attributed twenty-five sermons to our homilist, exclusively on the grounds of stylistic criteria.<sup>5</sup> Eleven of these are ascribed to Leontius in the manuscripts themselves, while the remainder have been transmitted under the names of John Chrysostom,

Timothy presbyter of Jerusalem, Timothy presbyter of Antioch, Athanasius of Alexandria and Amphilochius of Iconium. Sachot believes that in order to have his sermons included in homiliaria Leontius deliberately gave the name of other authors to works of his own, especially to sermons of which more than one dealt with the same subject. He concludes his article with the words: "Mais, s'il s'agit vraiment d'un faussaire, sommes-nous certains qu'il s'appelait véritablement Léonce, prêtre de Constantinople?"<sup>6</sup> Further investigation will prove to what degree Sachot's position is tenable. To some extent I am personally sceptical about it: to doubt Leontius' very existence seems to me at the present time extremely premature, not least in view of what follows in this article.

In his *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* III 7888-7900, Geerard takes over the suggestions of Sachot, whose article he calls *brevis sed gravis*.<sup>7</sup> The grounds on which Leontius is listed among the homilists of the seventh century is not made clear. In the course of preparing an edition of Leontius' sermons for the *Series Graeca* of the *Corpus Christianorum*, together with Pauline Allen, I have naturally had to consider if in the absence of external evidence there exist in Leontius' homilies internal indications, which would enable us to propose a more precise date than the sixth or seventh century. A more precise date would furthermore give us a firmer footing in determining the authenticity of the homilies attributed, or later ascribed, to Leontius. I hope to show here that a precise date for Leontius is in fact possible, and at the same time to demonstrate how cautious one must be in dealing with homiletic literature.

#### *Leontius' homily on the birth of John the Baptist.*

In the manuscripts two homilies on the birth of John the Baptist are attributed to Leontius. One of these (*BHG* 861p; *CPG* III 7908) is also transmitted under the name of Aetius, presbyter of Constantinople, and in an edition of this homily, forthcoming in *Analecta Bollandiana*, I have been able to show that this text has definitely to be accredited to Aetius, and that the sermon itself was preached in the year 453.<sup>8</sup> The second homily has to the present no number in *BHG* and the *Auctuarium*, nor in the *Clavis*. It is transmitted only in two manuscripts, Vallicellianus B.34, ff. 78<sup>v</sup>-80<sup>v</sup> and a copy of the same, Vatic. Barb.

gr. 497, ff. 267–268, and begins with a citation from Luke 1,68. The conclusion of the text is unfortunately missing.

However, although this sermon has been transmitted incompletely, and by only two manuscripts, it is of first-rate importance for us. The opening lines run as follows: Εὐλογητὸς ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησε λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ· ἐπεσκέψατο γὰρ ἡμᾶς καὶ σήμερον ἀνατολὴ ἐξ ὕψους. Ἐκαθεύδομεν γὰρ τῇ ῥαθυμίᾳ καὶ διύπνισεν ἡμᾶς τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ· ἐσάλειψε τὰ δόματα ἵνα στηρίξῃ ἡμᾶς ἰασάμενος τὰ τραύματα, ἐμάστιξε τὰ ἄσπυχα ἵνα παιδεύσῃ τὰ ἔμψυχα, ἐτάραξε τὴν γῆν ἵνα πληροφορηθῶσιν οἱ ἐν ὑπεροχῇ. Ἐσάλειψεν οὐκ ἀπόλεσεν, ἐπεσκέψατο οὐκ ἀπεφάνετο.

Immediately we are forced to consider whether the reference here to an earthquake will enable us to arrive at a date for the homily. Given the subject of the sermon, the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist, there are two possible periods of the year for the earthquake to have taken place. Until approximately the middle of the sixth century such a homily would have been part of the Christmas cycle, according to which the second Sunday before Christmas was devoted to the annunciation of John's birth to Zachary and the first Sunday before Christmas to the annunciation to Mary. From the second half of the sixth century, the birth of John begins to be celebrated on 24 June. This development is closely connected with the spread of the Mary cycle from the time of Justinian onwards, and in particular with the fixing of the annunciation to Mary on 25 March. The first testimony to this feast among the Greek homilists is Abraham of Ephesus, in the mid-sixth century.<sup>9</sup>

If we make an inventory of the earthquakes known to us there is none in the sixth century which falls in the month of June. We do find, however, an earthquake in December, namely on 14 December, 557,<sup>10</sup> which lasted for 10 days.<sup>11</sup> In the year 557, moreover, the first Sunday after 14 December was the second Sunday before Christmas, or the Sunday devoted to the celebration of the Baptist's birth. We are presented, then, with this Sunday as the day on which Leontius preached his sermon on John the Baptist: 17 December, 557. We should not find it surprising that the citizens of Constantinople should gather in the church under such circumstances. From Chrysostom we know that after an earthquake in Antioch the people there immediately ran to the church,<sup>12</sup> and even gathered there for a vigil on several successive nights.<sup>13</sup>

*The relationship between Leontius and BHG 848 (= CPG II 4656)*

Now that we have managed to date Leontius' homily on John the Baptist to the very day, and at the same time can state with certainty that Leontius lived in the sixth century, it is useful to investigate the relationship between Leontius' sermon and that of ps. Chrysostom on the birth of John the Baptist, ascribed by Sachot to Leontius. We are concerned here with the text designated as *BHG* 848, *CPG* II 4656, or Aldama 146. In his summary of the homilies to be attributed to Leontius, Sachot refers to these texts as 8A and 8B, in the belief that we are dealing with two versions of one and the same text.<sup>14</sup> There is indeed a connection between the two texts, in the sense that Leontius' sermon, apart from the opening paragraphs, is in large measure to be found in ps. Chrysostom. We find in addition sections from other authors, incorporated by ps. Chrysostom. Bardenhewer has already pointed out that in *BHG* 848 use is made of a homily of Antipater of Bostra on John the Baptist (*BHG* 847).<sup>15</sup> B. Marx, in his "Proclusmania", believed on the other hand that *BHG* 848 should be ascribed to Proclus of Constantinople, and that it was Antipater who used his sermon.<sup>16</sup> If we take into account the fact that in ps. Chrysostom's text the passage from Antipater occurs between passages from Leontius which form a unified whole in Leontius' text, we have a clear indication that ps. Chrysostom's text is secondary, with respect to Antipater and Leontius. On grounds of internal criteria C. Vona has already made this idea acceptable, as far as Antipater's work is concerned;<sup>17</sup> in this he has been followed by R. Caro.<sup>18</sup> However, Vona sees at the same time the influence of Antipater everywhere in ps. Chrysostom, even in those passages which now appear to be from the pen of Leontius. From this we can make a rule of thumb for homiletic literature: one should only suppose the use of another homily if parallels can be clearly proven.

The assumption that in *BHG* 848 we are dealing with a compilation is finally put beyond doubt by the discovery of a third source of which the compiler availed himself. Four passages appear to have been borrowed from an unedited homily, also by ps. Chrysostom, which I shall publish elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> The sources of the following in *BHG* 848 can be traced:

PG 61, 757,46<sup>a.i.</sup> — 757,40<sup>a.i.</sup> : *BHG* 843k (Barocc. Auct. T.3.4, f. 260<sup>o</sup>)  
 758,4<sup>a.i.</sup> — 759,59 : Leontius

- 759,59 — 759,71 : *BHG* 843k (Barocc. Auct. T.3.4, f. 260<sup>v</sup>)  
 759,71 — 760,35 : Leontius  
 760,36 — 760,52 : Antipater (PG 85,1764 A 13 - C 5)  
 760,52 — 760,57 : Leontius  
 760,59 — 760,74 : *BHG* 843k (Barocc. Auct. T.3.4, f. 261<sup>r-v</sup>)  
 760,74 — 760,75 : Antipater (PG 85,1765 B 9)  
 761,44 — 762,22 : *BHG* 843k (Barocc. Auct. T.3.4, f. 260<sup>v</sup>-261<sup>r</sup>)

The question is now whether we can find the unidentified passages of *BHG* 848, namely PG 61,757<sup>40a.i.</sup>-758<sup>4a.i.</sup>, 760<sup>78</sup>-761<sup>46</sup> and 762<sup>22-49</sup>. As far as the last two passages are concerned, it seems possible to make a responsible conjecture. From our analysis it has become certain that the compiler drew on Leontius, among other authors, and indeed the following characteristic Leontian turns of phrase are found in these passages: 761,5 και τούτου μάρτυς; 761,31 ὡς ἔστιν αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ἰωάννου ἀκοῦσαι λέγοντος; 761,36 ἄκουε συνετώς; 761,40 ἐκ πολλῶν τῶν χρόνων. Leontius' homily on John's birth breaks off in the two manuscripts with the words: Ταῦτα τῶν παραλειφθέντων ἡμῖν τῇ προτεραιᾷ κεφαλαίων οἱ τόκοι, πᾶν γὰρ κεφάλαιον τόκον τίκει. Ὅθεν και τὸ βρέφος τόκος ὀνομάζεται ὡς κεφάλαιον γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ τὸν σπόρον τῇ γυναικὶ δανεῖζει — κεφαλὴ γὰρ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ —, τίκει δὲ τῷ κεφαλαίῳ τὸν τόκον ἢ γυ(νή) ... This would form an excellent transition to PG 61, 760<sup>70sqq.</sup>, where there begins an exposition of the words ἔτεκεν και ἐγέννησεν (cf. Luc. 1,57). In other words, we have here the lost passages of Leontius' homily – whether whole or in part it is impossible to determine. We can now conclude that the first passage, PG 61,757<sup>40a.i.</sup>-758<sup>4a.i.</sup>, in any case does not derive from Leontius' sermon, which has been totally reworked. In this conclusion we are supported by the fact that in the passage in question we find no typical Leontian turns of phrase. The source of this section is to be sought elsewhere, perhaps in a homily where the annunciation of John's birth to Zachary is central. PG 61,757<sup>31a.i.</sup>-758<sup>54a.i.</sup> contains a long monologue by Zachary, introduced by the words: Εἶπε δὲ Ζαχαρίας εὐθέως κατὰ ψυχὴν and closing with Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὁ Ζαχαρίας εἰκότως. Gabriel's answer then follows: Ὁ δὲ ἄγγελός φησι πρὸς αὐτόν (PG 61,758<sup>54-33a.i.</sup>) to which Zachary reacts in the next section (PG 61,758<sup>33-4a.i.</sup>).

In conclusion we can affirm that in view of the borrowings from Antipater of Bostra and Leontius, presbyter of Constantinople,

*BHG* 848 must be dated to after 557. It should also be noticed that the popularity of this compilation, which began to appear very early in homiletic collections (the oldest witness is the famous uncial manuscript, Scorialensis  $\Phi$ -III-20), was achieved at the expense of the transmission of Leontius' homily and of the early homily of ps. Chrysostom, Ἀπαραίτητος (*BHG* 843 k).

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> PG 86,1976-1993 *In mediam Pentecostem*; PG 86,1993-2004 *In sanctam Parasceuen*.
- <sup>2</sup> M. Aubineau, *Homélie Pascales*. SC 186 (Paris 1972)341-468.
- <sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, 344.
- <sup>4</sup> P. Allen-C. Datema, Leontius, presbyter of Constantinople – a compiler?, *JÖB* 29 (1980)9-20.
- <sup>5</sup> M. Sachot, Les homélie de Léonce, prêtre de Constantinople!, *RScR* 51(1977)234-245.
- <sup>6</sup> *Art. cit.*, 241.
- <sup>7</sup> M. Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* III (Turnhout 1979)487.
- <sup>8</sup> C. Datema, A homily on John the Baptist attributed to Aetius, presbyter of Constantinople (*BHG* 861p; *CPG* III 7908).
- <sup>9</sup> M. Jugie, *Homélie Mariales Byzantines* II, PO XIX, 297-309.
- <sup>10</sup> Malalas, Bonn edition pp. 488-489; Agathias V, 3ff.; Theophanes A.M. 6050 και τῷ Δεκεμβρίῳ μηνὶ ἰδ' ἐγένονεν ἕτερος σεισμός φοβερός πάνυ. Cf. Glanville Downey, Earthquakes at Constantinople and Vicinity, A.D. 342-1452, *Speculum* XXX (1955) 596-600.
- <sup>11</sup> Malalas, p. 489 ἡ δὲ αὐτὴ φοβερά ἀπειλὴ ἐπεκράτησεν ἐπὶ ἡμέρας δέκα; Theophanes A.M. 6050 ἔμεινεν δὲ σειομένη ἡ γῆ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς ἡμέρας δέκα.
- <sup>12</sup> PG 48,1027.
- <sup>13</sup> PG 50,713-716.
- <sup>14</sup> M. Sachot, *art. cit.*, 236.
- <sup>15</sup> O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchen Literatur* IV (Freiburg im Breisgau, 21924) 306, note.
- <sup>16</sup> B. Marx, *Procliana* (Münster 1940) 102.
- <sup>17</sup> C. Vona, Le due orazioni di Antipatro di Bostra, *Lateranum* N.S. XXXIV, 1968, 144-149.
- <sup>18</sup> R. Caro, *La Homiletica Mariana Griega en el Siglo V*, I (Dayton Ohio 1971) 233-234.
- <sup>19</sup> As far as I am aware at present, there are four Greek manuscripts of this text : Oxoniensis Bodleianus Auct. T.3.4, ff. 259-261<sup>v</sup>; Hierosolymitanus S. Sepulcri 134, ff. 392<sup>v</sup>-395<sup>v</sup>; Hierosolymitanus S. Sepulcri 135, ff. 128-130; Athous, Koutloumousiou 209, ff. 11<sup>v</sup>-14<sup>v</sup>. I refer here to the folio numbers of the Oxoniensis because it is the most accessible. For a Georgian translation cf. M. van Esbroeck, *Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens* (Louvain-la-Neuve 1975) 172-173.