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Some New Patristic Scholia on the Gospel of Matthew*

by

Georgi Parpulov

Composite commentaries (*catenae*) on the Bible are often sifted for bits and pieces from lost works of patristic exegesis, so it is odd that a rare specimen got no further attention after Jean-Marie Olivier and Marie-Aude Monégier du Sorbier discovered it some forty years ago¹. Its nameless compiler mixed a pre-existing *catena* on Matthew (CPG C111)² with extracts from John Chrysostom's homilies (CPG 4424)³, and threw in some forty scholia ascribed to Origen, Apollinarius of Laodicea, Theodore of Heraclea, *et al.*⁴ These additions cannot have been borrowed from any other known *catena*, because a handful of them (printed and translated below) are unattested elsewhere⁵. Uncommon passages of this kind were either excerpted, in each case, straight from the respective author's commentary on the first Gospel, or culled from a *catena* that is now lost. I cannot date the compiler's work as such. His youngest source was Severus of Antioch († 538). Olivier's and Monégier du Sorbier's manuscript is written in *bouletée* minuscule from the first half of the tenth century⁶. Another, newly-identified⁷ witness is in eleventh-century *Perlschrift* (Fig. 1)⁸.

Mt 23:5b **Ὁρ(ι)γ(ένους)**· Φυλακτήρια εἶχον οἱ Φαρισαῖοι οἱ τὰς ἐντολὰς βιβλιδάριω κρεμουῖντες ἐν τῷ τραχήλῳ ἢ ἐπὶ χεῖρα (codd. ἐπιχείρα) φέροντες κενοδοξίας χάριν δῆθεν τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς φυλάσσειν τὸν νόμον, ὡς φησὶν «ἔσται ἀσάλευτα πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν σου». Κράσπεδόν ἐστιν τὰ κατὰ τὸν νόμον ἐντεταλμένα εἰς ἀνάμνησιν τῶν ἐντολῶν, ὅπερ ἦν κλῶσμα ὑακίνθινον ἐπὶ τῶν ἱματίων περὶ τὴν ᾧαν τὴν περὶ τοὺς πόδας ἀπορράπτοντες⁹.

Mt 23:15 **Θεοδώρου Ἡρακλείας**· Ἐπειδὴ οἱ μαθηταὶ σπουδάζουσιν αἰεὶ τοὺς διδασκάλους μιμεῖσθαι· ἐὰν πεισθῇ τις ὑμῖν καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον (codd. ἡμέτερον) ζηλώσῃ βίον, εἰς κόλασιν παραπέμπεται¹⁰.

Mt 24:15 **Ἀπολινάριου**· Παῦλος ἡμᾶς διδάσκει ὅτι ὁ ἀντίχριστός ἐστιν ἐπὶ ἐρημώσει τοῦ κόσμου ἔλθων καὶ καθίσας εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀποδεικνύων ἑαυτὸν Θεόν, ὑπεραιρόμενος (codd. ὑπεραιρόμενον) ἐπὶ πάντα θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα τῷ τὰ εἰδῶλα καθελεῖν¹¹.

Mt 25:1 **Σευήρου Ἀντιοχείας**· Ἀναλογησώμεθα τοίνυν τὰς δέκα παρθένας ἃς εἰσάγει τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπαντῆσαι τῷ νυμφίῳ παρεσκευασμένας καὶ τὰς μὲν πέντε τὰς φρονίμους μιμησώμεθα, τῶν ἐτέρων δὲ πέντε τῶν σκαιῶν καὶ ἀνοήτων φύγωμεν τὸ παράδειγμα. Κἂν ταῖς ἀγίαις ταύταις ἡμέραις τῶν νηστειῶν λαμπάδας ἡμῶν εὐτρεπίσωμεν· παρθένας μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν πιστῶν ἐκάστου ψυχῇ, νυμφίον ἓνα καὶ ἄνδρα γινώσκουσα τὸν Χριστόν, καθὼς Παῦλος Κορινθίοις φησιν «ἡρμυσάμην γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ παρθένον ἀγνὴν παραστήσαι τῷ Χριστῷ»¹².

Mt 25:25 **Ἀπολινάριου**· Ὡς μᾶλλον ἐφοβοῦ, φησιν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἔδει σπουδάσαι καὶ τὰς αὐτοῦ πληρῶσαι· οὐ γὰρ τῆς ἐκεῖνων ἀνηκουστίας ὑπέχειν ἡμελλες τὸν λόγον αὐτός, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνοι οἱ ἀπαιτούμενοι ἔλαβον καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τούτῳ πρᾶξιν. Τὸ δὲ τῆς διχοτομήσεως ἐνταῦθα σαφέστερον εἴρηται ἀφαίρεσις ὃν τοῦ δοθέντος πνεύματος¹³.

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¹ J.-M. OLIVIER – M.-A. MONÉGIER DU SORBIER, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs de Tchécoslovaquie*, CNRS, Paris 1983, 75-76. This catena has now been assigned the CPG number C119.1.

² *Des Petrus von Laodicea Erklärung des Matthäusevangeliums*, hrsg. von C. F. G. HEINRICI, Dürr, Leipzig 1908. On this catena see J. REUSS, *Matthäus-, Markus- und Johannes-Katenen nach den handschriftlichen Quellen untersucht*, Aschendorff, Münster 1941, 52-78 and M. A. BARBÀRA – C. CURTI, *Greek Exegetical Catenae*, in *Patrology: The Eastern Fathers from the Council of Chalcedon (451) to John of Damascus († 750)*, ed. A. DI BERARDINO, tr. A. WALFORD, James Clarke & Co., Cambridge 2006, 605-654 at 645 and 648.

³ PG 57, 13-470; PG 58, 471-794.

⁴ See the list in OLIVIER – MONÉGIER DU SORBIER, *Catalogue*, cit., 75.

⁵ Cf. *Origenes Matthäuseklärung*, III, hrsg. von E. KLOSTERMANN (GCS 41.1), Hinrichs, Leipzig 1941, 11-235; *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt*, hrsg. von J. REUSS (TU 61), Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1957. The passages cannot be found in the on-line *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* or in any other *catena* manuscript beside the two cited below.

⁶ Diktyon 55549, GA 1422, Prague, Národní knihovna České republiky, XXV B 7, ff. 14r-114^{vb}r. The biblical text, which sits in the middle of the page, is written in minuscule *bouletée*; the commentary, placed in the upper, outer, and lower margins, is written in majuscule. – The Luke *catena* in this manuscript is being studied by Dr Panagiotis Manafis.

⁷ H. A. G. HOUGHTON – M. MONIER, *Greek Manuscripts in Alexandria*, JThS 71 (2020) 119-133 at 126-129.

⁸ Diktyon 33009, GA 2937, Alexandria, Patriarchal Library, 122, ff. 1r-42r. Many leaves are lost at the beginning. The biblical text, which is abridged, is written in majuscule and alternates with the commentary, which occupies the full width of the page and is written in *Perlschrift* minuscule. – The Mark *catena* in this manuscript is being studied by Dr Mina Monier.

⁹ GA 1422, f. 88v. – GA 2937, f. 8r. Here and further below, I have silently corrected the trivial spelling errors found in these two manuscripts.

¹⁰ GA 1422, f. 89r. – GA 2937, f. 9r.

¹¹ GA 1422, f. 93r. – GA 2937, f. 13v.

¹² GA 1422, f. 96r. – GA 2937, ff. 17v-18r.

¹³ GA 1422, f. 98r. – GA 2937, f. 20v.

Mt 26:3 Ὁρ(ι)γ(ένους)· Ἐλόθη τῆς ἀρχιερωσύνης ὁ θεσμός παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις, ὡς δηλοῖ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον· ἐνιαυτὸν γὰρ καθίσταντο μόνον. Τοῦτο δὲ Ἡρώδης ἐποίησεν διὰ τὴν ἀκαταστασίαν αὐτῶν, ὡς ἱστορεῖ Ἰώσηπος, ὃ καλὸν χρήσασθαι· πάνυ γὰρ συμφωνεῖ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τῆς Νέας¹⁴.

Origen on Mt 23:5b: *Pharisees wore phylacteries out of vanity, having the Commandments, as a demonstration of sorts that they sincerely observe the Law, in a booklet hung on their neck or attached to their arm, as in: [“And you shall put these words in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your arm, and] they shall be things unshakeable before your eyes” (Deut 11:18). The Law required, as a reminder of the Commandments, fringes, that is, blue thread (Num 15:38) which they stitched onto that hem of their garments which hung round their feet.*

Origen makes a similar point, but with different words, in his large commentary on Matthew (CPG 1450.2)¹⁵. The above *scholion* must have been known to John Chrysostom, who repeats part of it¹⁶ in a sermon (CPG 4424.72) and adds the curious detail that in his day Christian women would likewise hang miniature Gospel books on their necks¹⁷. The Pharisees’ phylacteries (*tefillin*) are paralleled by a silver armband, now at the Israel Museum, datable to the sixth or seventh century AD and inscribed with several verses from the Septuagint, including Deut 11:18¹⁸.

Theodore of Heraclea on Mt 23:15: *Since disciples are always eager to imitate their teachers, if someone listens to you [Pharisees] and strives after your way of life, he is sent to hell.*

Apollinarius on Mt 24:15: *Paul teaches us (2 Thess 2:4) that the antichrist is he who, having come at the desolation of the world, takes his seat in the temple of God, declares himself to be God, exalts himself above every god or objects of worship by taking down the idols.*

Severus of Antioch on Mt 25:1-13: *Let us therefore consider the ten virgins whom the Gospel describes prepared to meet the bridegroom, let us imitate the five wise ones, let us shun the example of the five clumsy and foolish ones. And may we, in these holy days of fasting, get our lamps ready. Because every believer’s soul is a virgin who knows but one bridegroom and one husband, Christ, just as Paul tells the Corinthians: “for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Cor 11:2).*

This is an excerpt from one of Severus’s cathedral sermons (CPG 7035.121), the full text of which survives only in Syriac translation¹⁹.

Apollinarius on Mt 25:25-30: *Whom you feared more, it says, him you should have served more zealously and fulfilled his [commands]. You were not to be held accountable yourself for those [other servants’] wilfulness, yet at the reckoning they also took an extra share. This clarifies that “cutting up” (Mt 24:51) stands for being deprived of the spirit that [one] was given.*

Origen on Mt 26:3: *The Jews, as the Gospel makes it clear, dissolved the established order of high priesthood, since [high priests] would hold office just for a year. Josephus – whom it is good to use, as he is in full agreement with New Testament history – reports that Herod did this because of their disorderliness.*

Origen probably glosses the plural ἀρχιερεῖς (high priests) in the Gospel text. In fact the Jews had nothing to do with that: it was not Herod but the Roman procurator Valerius Gratus who would erratically appoint high priests and remove them (*Jewish Antiquities* XVIII.2). In the following section (XVIII.3) Josephus does mention Herod the Tetrarch, so this may be an honest mistake.

It must be said that the two codices do not always give accurate indications of authorship: a passage that they both ascribe to Isidore of Pelusium (Πηλουσιώτου)²⁰ is actually by John Chrysostom²¹, while one marked in them with Σευήρου²² appears elsewhere under Apollinarius’s name²³. On the other hand, a further Σευήρου Ἀντιοχείας²⁴ finds confirmation in other *catenae*²⁵ and the Severus scholion printed above is undoubtedly his²⁶.

¹⁴ GA 1422, f. 100v – GA 2937, f. 23r.

¹⁵ *Origenes Matthäuseklärung*, II, hrsg. von E. KLOSTERMANN unter Mitwirkung von E. BENZ (GCS 38), Hinrichs, Leipzig 1933, 21-22.

¹⁶ Cf. esp. Chrysostom’s κλῶσμα ὑακίνθινον ἐπὶ τῶν ἱματίων περὶ τὴν ὥαν τὴν περὶ τοὺς πόδας ἀπορράπτεσθαι.

¹⁷ PG 58, 669 (Homily 72); tr. G. PREVOST in *NPNF*, I.10, 437.

¹⁸ N. BENOVIĆ, *Psalm 91:1 and the Rabbinic Shema’ in Greek on a Byzantine Amuletic Armband*, *Textus* 26 (2016) 143-171.

¹⁹ *Les Homiliae cathedrales de Sévère d’Antioche: Traduction syriaque de Jacques d’Édesse*, éd. et tr. M. BRIÈRE (PO 138), Firmin-Didot, Paris 1960, 96-97 (Homily 121).

²⁰ GA 1422, f. 99v – GA 2937, f. 22r.

²¹ PG 58, 718.

²² GA 1422, f. 114v – GA 2937, f. 41r.

²³ *Matthäus-Kommentare*, hrsg. REUSS, cit. (n. 5), 53 (no. 151).

²⁴ GA 1422, f. 113r – GA 2937, f. 39r-v.

²⁵ *Catenae Graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum*, ed. J. A. CRAMER, I, Typographeum Academicum, Oxford 1840, 243 (II. 19-21).

²⁶ See note 19.

In any case, my small collection of *inedita* illustrates three different modes of Gospel commentary which might be called elucidatory (Theodore, Apollinarius), hortatory (Severus), and scholarly (Origen). The first clarifies the evangelists' words through paraphrase or parallels with other biblical passages. The second uses Scripture for moral instruction. The third explains the Gospels' historical setting.

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Abstract: This is an edition and translation of six previously unknown Greek scholia on Matthew's Gospel. Their authors are Origen of Alexandria, Apollinarius of Laodicea, Theodore of Heraclea, and Severus of Antioch.

Keywords: Greek New Testament; catenae; patristic exegesis

Fig. 1. Alexandria, Patriarchal Library, MS 122, fol. 9v (photographed by Hugh Houghton, published by permission of the Patriarchate of Alexandria)

This page shows the make-up of the *catena*. Part of CPG C111 (ed. HEINRICI, *Petrus*, cit., 262) is marked simply with **α**, without naming the source. It is followed by excerpts attributed to Theodore of Heraclea (ed. REUSS, *Matthäus-Kommentare*, cit., 89),

[illegible]