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PASCHA IN THE HOMILIES OF SEVERUS  
OF ANTIOCH (512-518) : PREPARATION  
AND CELEBRATION

Of the 125 surviving homilies of Severus, patriarch of Antioch from 512-518<sup>1</sup>, we have twenty-nine preached in Lent and around Easter, many of which can be dated<sup>2</sup>. Most of these were delivered in Lent or Holy Week and six of them are catechetical<sup>3</sup>. In addition

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1. On Severus in general see P. ALLEN, C. T. R. HAYWARD, *Severus of Antioch*, The Early Church Fathers, London and New York, 2004 ; F. ALPI, *La route royale. Sévère d'Antioche et les Églises d'Orient (512-518)*, 2 vol., Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 188, Beirut, 2009. For the liturgy and the liturgical year in Antioch during Severus' time see A. BAUMSTARK, « Das Kirchenjahr in Antiocheia zwischen 512 und 518 », *Römische Quartalschrift* 11, 1897, pp. 31-66 ; ID. « Der antiochenische Festkalender des frühen sechsten Jahrhunderts », *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 5, 1923, pp. 123-135 ; A. OLIVAR, « Sever d'Antioquia et la història de la predicació », *Revista catalana de teologia* 5, 1980, pp. 403-442 ; G. J. CUMING, « The Liturgy of Antioch in the Time of Severus (513-518) », *Time and Community. In Honor of Thomas Julian Talley* (ed. J. Neil Alexander), Washington DC, 1990, pp. 83-103. See now in general on the liturgy and church architecture of the city W. MAYER, P. ALLEN, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch (300-638 CE)*, Late Antique History and Religion 5, Leuven, 2012. The surviving homilies of Severus delivered during Lent and Easter are 15-23, 39, 40, 42-44, 68-70, 87-90, 105-109, 119-123. The editions of the homilies under discussion in this paper will be given individually below.

2. M. BRIÈRE, *Les « homiliae cathedrales » de Sévère d'Antioche. Traduction syriaque de Jacques d'Édesse. Introduction générale à toutes les homélies*, PO 29/1, Paris, 1960, pp. 8-72.

3. On Severus' catechetical homilies see F. ALPI, *La route royale*, p. 138, pp. 145-147 ; R. ROUX, « Merkmale der theologischen Argumentation in den Katechetischen Homilien des Severus von Antiochien », *Sacris Erudiri* 52, 2013, pp. 161-180. Earlier works on these homilies can be found in F. GRAFFIN, « La catéchèse de Sévère d'Antioche », *L'Orient syrien* 5, 1960, pp. 47-54 ; J. GRIBOMONT, « La catéchèse de Sévère d'Antioche et le Credo », *Parole de l'Orient* 6-7, 1975-1976, pp. 125-158. Both Graffin and Roux point out that Severus' catechetical homilies are longer than most of the others, and Graffin, p. 48, alerts

there are various hymns attributed to Severus<sup>4</sup>, which appear to have been sung on Holy Saturday or on Easter day itself, and a homily on the resurrection accounts delivered in July 515<sup>5</sup>, which is the only complete homily of the patriarch surviving in the original Greek.

After the condemnation of Severus and his person, his works were ordered to be burnt<sup>6</sup> but managed to survive: today we have access to many of them in very early Syriac translations and catenae fragments. The quantity of the surviving homilies which the patriarch preached over a six-year period varies. For the year 512/3 we have eight delivered in the Lenten and Easter period, for 513/4 and 514/5 only three in each year, followed by four in 515/6, five in 516/7 and again in 517/8.<sup>7</sup> From the fact that from a six-year patriarchate we have only two surviving homilies delivered on Easter day itself is testimony to the transmission problems of these homilies, and of those of many other preachers from the early church<sup>8</sup>.

In this chapter I shall analyse the homilies which Severus delivered during Lent and Eastertide, situating them in their liturgical and historical contexts, before discussing the various themes that the patriarch addressed during this period of the liturgical year.

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us to the fact that they were delivered on the Wednesday of Holy Week, unlike in the time of John Chrysostom, who delivered his catecheses on Holy Thursday.

4. Severus, *Hymn.* 75-I-VI to 91-II-IV, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, PO 6/1, Paris, 1909, repr. Turnhout, 1971, pp. 118-132. On the somewhat problematical nature of the collection in which Severus' hymns survive see C. BURRIS, L. VAN ROMPAY, « Some further notes on Thecla in Syriac Christianity », *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 6, 2003, no. 2.

5. *Hom.* 77; ed. M.-A. Kugener and E. Triffaux, PO 16/5, Paris, 1922; repr. Turnhout, 2003.

6. For the details see P. ALLEN, C. T. R. HAYWARD, *Severus of Antioch*, p. 29.

7. Calculations taken from the inventory in M. BRIÈRE, *Introduction générale*, pp. 50-62.

8. We know this for a fact: see, for example, M. BRIÈRE, *Introduction générale*, p. 51 n. 2, for the case of some of Severus' homilies on the Nativity. Some martyr homilies are also clearly missing: *ibid.*, p. 51 n. 1. On the gaps in Severus' homiletic output see P. ALLEN, « A bishop's spirituality: the case of Severus of Antioch », *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church* (ed. P. Allen, R. Canning, and L. Cross), vol. 1, Brisbane, 1998, pp. 169-180, at 170 n. 6.