

MICHAEL ANGOLD, *Germanos II Patriarch of Constantinople (1223–1240), Select Sermons. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Translated Texts for Byzantinists 14). Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2024. 368 pp. – ISBN 9781802074598 (Hardcover) (£ 96) | 9781836245254 (Paperback) (£ 23.99) | 9781835532782 (ePub)

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A book dedicated to the important figure of Patriarch Germanos II is most welcome. This is all the more significant given that it is authored by an eminent scholar in Byzantine Studies and an expert in the later period of the Empire, Professor Emeritus MICHAEL ANGOLD (henceforth, A.). In his Preface, the author outlines his working methodology and notes that the book was composed during the recent pandemic. Despite the difficult circumstances, the result is a felicitous intellectual contribution to the field. The subject of the volume, Germanos II, ascended the patriarchal throne of Constantinople at Nicaea scarcely two decades after the fall of the Byzantine capital to the Crusaders, and he held the office for nearly two decades until his death. A prolific preacher, Germanos left behind a substantial homiletic corpus that occupies a prominent place in the homiletic production of late Byzantium. For the first time, the volume makes accessible to Byzantinists and a broader readership alike a selection of 21 of his sermons in English translation.

The book begins with a lengthy Introduction (pp. 1–80), which deals with the following topics: ‘A date list of Germanos II’s sermons’, ‘The historical context of Ms. Paris. Coisl. 278’, ‘Germanos II’s early years’, ‘Germanos II and the emperor John III Vatatzes’, ‘Opposition to Germanos II’, ‘Bogomils’, ‘Rivalry with Theodore Doukas, “emperor at Thessaloniki”’, ‘Germanos II’s encounter with the Latins’, ‘Germanos II as ecumenical patriarch’, and ‘A patriarch in his sermons’. The translation takes up the bulk of the volume (pp. 81–324). Each sermon is preceded by an introduction under the heading ‘Chronology and historical context’, which is followed by an ‘Argument’ providing a summary of the sermon’s content. A range of explanatory footnotes accompanies the texts. The volume concludes with a Bibliography, divided into primary and secondary sources, and a comprehensive Index (pp. 325–338 and 339–347, respectively).

No critical edition of Germanos' homilies exists to date; more problematically, many remain unpublished. A. provides a clear presentation of the contents of the principal manuscript, Paris. Coisl. 278. This codex, dating from the late thirteenth century, contains 53 texts by Germanos (here numbered I–LIII),¹ though it does not preserve his entire homiletic output. A.'s list of the Coislin texts (pp. 3–8) includes English translations of the rubrics, references to available editions, and, where possible, a date for each text. The collection comprises three letters (nos. IV, V, and XLIX) and six catecheses (nos. XLVII, XLVIII, and L–LIII), while the remaining items are designated as sermons (ὁμιλῖαι) and discourses (λόγοι). This latter distinction is discussed in detail in the Introduction (pp. 10–12), but it needs to be examined in its diachrony, which is a task for the future. To date, only partial editions of Germanos' homiletic oeuvre have seen the light of day. These include older editions of seven sermons (not solely by FRANÇOIS COMBEFIS, as stated on p. ix), reprinted in *Patrologia Graeca*, vols. 98 and 140 (two and five texts respectively); a single epistle edited by GERHARD FICKER in 1908 from the Coislin codex; and the now-rare 1913 edition by the Greek scholar SPYRIDON LAGOPATIS. The latter contains 15 sermons and discourses, including the first catechesis, along with three epistles, based primarily on the Coislin manuscript but also drawing on Barocci 131 and Monac. gr. 207. Despite these efforts, more than half of the texts in the Coislin collection (31 texts) remain unedited.

The author numbers the texts he selects for translation from 1 to 21. All of them are available in the original Greek in one of the aforementioned editions. In particular, the translation includes nearly all the texts found in the LAGOPATIS edition (except for two letters: LAGOPATIS, Ep. 2/Coisl. no. XLIX, and Ep. 3, which is absent from the Coislin manuscript) as well as the letter edited by FICKER. It also includes, in this sequence, PG, vol. 140, nos. I, VII, IV (not VI, as incorrectly cited at p. 7 and p. 240 n. 641), and II, which are contained in the Coislin. In the translation, page changes in the original edition are consistently marked to assist the reader. Admittedly, the coexistence of three numbering systems for the same text (those of the Coislin manuscript, the edition, and the translation) can be confusing. Nevertheless, whenever one of these numbering systems is used in the main text, A. meticulously provides cross-references in the footnotes to the other numbering(s), ensuring the precise identification of each text (as, for exam-

1. See [Diktyon 49419](#) with bibliography; microfilm freely available at the platform [Gallica](#) of the BnF.

ple, on p. 178). This difficulty is expected to be mitigated once the critical edition of the corpus is published. This edition is currently being prepared by ELISABETH SCHIFFER of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, who has already produced some preliminary results.

All of the sermons are shown to date from the early years of Germanos' patriarchate. In the Coislin manuscript, they are mainly arranged in chronological order and span the period from 3 January 1223, the very outset of his patriarchal tenure, to 2 March 1228. The six catechetical discourses at the end of the collection likely correspond to the six years encompassed by this timeframe. Moreover, it is convincingly argued (pp. 13–16) that the manuscript constitutes a copy of an official collection. According to A.'s meticulous and well-substantiated analysis, Germanos emerges as a pivotal figure of his era — one under whose leadership the Church of Constantinople retained its unity, despite the political fragmentation of the Empire. His efforts contributed significantly to restoring the authority and prestige of both the patriarchate and the imperial office. In addition, the sermons are not mere rhetorical displays but reveal the patriarch's profound sense of duty towards his spiritual flock and empathy for them, notwithstanding the personal hostility he faced from segments of the clergy and society. The final section of the Introduction offers a valuable investigation of the preacher's relationship with his congregation-audience.

It is noteworthy that the liturgical occasion on which a sermon was delivered does not necessarily determine its primary theme. Rather, Germanos frequently focuses on moral exhortation, denunciations of heresy, and the censure of specific incidents within the Church. His sermons also serve as a medium through which he discloses his concerns, fears, and introspective reflections, thus providing unique insights into his character and life. Two illustrative examples may be cited: in Sermon 10, he refers to his short stature, which had provoked derogatory remarks (p. 170; cf. p. 77), while in Sermon 11, he undertakes a personal self-examination (pp. 181–184), evocative of the Byzantine poems 'To oneself' and of catanyctic poetry.

ANGOLD's book displays the merits of historical precision and acuity, qualities evident in the Introduction as well as in the annotation accompanying the translation. A notable strength of the study lies in the author's systematic referencing of passages from the translated sermons, allowing for the verification of his arguments by the reader. Moreover, the notes to the translation include many Biblical passages quoted or referred to in the text as

well as some references to other sources ('hypotexts'), which elucidate the text and are helpful, even crucial, for its understanding.

The same meticulous treatment is evident in the translation itself. A. characterises Germanos' style as marked by 'rambling sentences' and a 'quite abstruse' vocabulary, following the tradition of the rhetorical masters of the late twelfth century (p. 67). While taking account of these features, he succeeds in producing a translation that is both reliable and highly readable. To achieve this, A. carefully divides long paragraphs and frequently inserts, within square brackets, words or phrases that are either absent or only implied in the Greek original but are necessary for clarity in English. That said, the inclusion of occasional cross-references justifying such interpolations would have been welcome. For example, at Hom. 11, the reader encounters the following sentence: 'If this is not the case, but [instead] we have been rebuking you for taking the straight [and narrow] path, while we ourselves have been travelling in the opposite direction down a twisting path, ...' (p. 179). Given that 'straight' is contrasted to 'twisting', the insertion of 'narrow' appears puzzling — until later in the text, where we read about 'the narrow and grief-stricken path' of the Christians (p. 182). A forward cross-reference here would have clarified the logic behind the addition. One may also disagree regarding some choices of rendering. For instance, in the same passage, the phrase 'rebuking you for taking the straight path' should be rendered as 'advising' or 'exhorting' you (νουθετοῦμεν) to take that path. Elsewhere, the term 'Emperor Christ' (p. 176; cf. p. 75) is understandable as a way of highlighting the analogy between Christ and the earthly emperor (βασιλεύς); nonetheless, 'Christ the King' might still be preferable.

In the future, SCHIFFER's eagerly awaited critical edition will likely offer the opportunity to reassess specific aspects of the current English translation, while additional sources will probably be identified. It is worth pointing out the case in Sermon 21 of the 'well-intentioned servant girl' 'pestering [Jonah] until he stood up to confess his fault' (pp. 311f.). A. interprets this figure as 'a new character' introduced into Jonah's story as a personification of the sea (p. 72). If the presence of such a servant girl in Germanos' narrative were accepted, I would suggest that he could have drawn inspiration from the maidservants in the well-known Gospel episode of Peter's triple denial of Christ (Matthew 26:69–72). However, no such character is introduced into the prophet's story. Instead, 'the grateful servant' should

be understood as the sea itself,² personified as the Lord's servant, which, in the form of a storm (Jonah 1:4, 11), punishes the prophet's despicable behaviour. In this reading, the personification remains valid but excludes the introduction of a new narrative figure.

One might also raise the question of whether it is justifiable to translate and analyse only a selection of sermons. This approach risks leaving the remaining homilies, including the unpublished ones, perhaps indefinitely outside the purview of scholarly translation and commentary. Nonetheless, the sheer pleasure of holding the present scholarly volume in our hands far outweighs such concerns. Some philological issues inevitably lie beyond the book's scope and remain desiderata for future research. These include, notably, a comprehensive study of the manuscript tradition of the homilies (cf. pp. 8–9 on the earlier witness Barocci 131),³ and an examination of the relationship of Germanos' genuine homiletic activity and the *Kyriakodromion*, which ZACHARIAS XENTARAS edited under the patriarch's name (cf. reference at p. 16).

Occasional bibliographical additions or corrections may still be made. In this context, and by way of clarification regarding my publications, I would like to note that the 1997 study of the Homilies of Leo VI, published by Brill in The Medieval Mediterranean series (p. 329), is a separate work from the 2008 critical edition of the same collection in the Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca; the latter book should be referenced among the primary sources on p. 327. Elsewhere, the critical edition of Philotheos Kokkinos' *Objections to Gregoras* should be cited instead of the PG (p. 15 n. 30).⁴ Finally, a few minor typographical errors occur, particularly in the occasional Greek words and phrases, as at p. xviii Κωνσταντινιπόλεως > Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, p. 13 τῷ ... ὁξεῖ > τῷ ... ὁξεῖ, pp. 74, 327 Kurbina > Kubina, p. 328 Tessuri > Tessari, p. 333 Ἰωάννης > Ἰωάννης, p. 338 κώικας > κώδικας. Altogether, however, this is a very well edited book.

In conclusion, ANGOLD's work constitutes a commendable contribution to the study of medieval Greek homiletic literature. Through his competent translations, balanced commentary, and judicious analysis, he has rendered

2. LAGOPATIS, p. 338, 29-30: Ἀγανακτεῖ κατὰ τοῦ δραπέτου ἢ θάλασσα, τὴν καταφρόνησιν τοῦ δεσπότης ἢ εὐγνώμων δούλη διεκδικοῦσα.

3. On the manuscripts of the sermons, see the 2011 article by E. SCHIFFER cited in the Bibliography and the older study of the manuscripts of Germanos' works by LAGOPATIS, included in his 1913 book already mentioned, pp. 125–139.

4. DEMETRIOS B. ΚΑΪΜΑΚΗΣ, Φιλοθέου Κοκκίνου Δογματικὰ ἔργα. Μέρος Α' (Θεσσαλονικεῖς Βυζαντινοὶ Συγγραφεῖς 3). Thessaloniki 1983.

outstanding service not only to the legacy of the medieval author he engages with, but also to contemporary scholars and readers alike. Liverpool University Press is to be congratulated for including the volume in its TTB series.

Keywords

Byzantine homiletics; Empire of Nicea