Pseudo-Athanasian *Homily on the Man Born Blind*: Slavonic Sermon from an Unknown Greek Original

*Irina M. Gritsevskaya*
Novosibirsk High School of Military Command, Novosibirsk, Siberia
irgri@inbox.ru

*Viacheslav V. Lytvynenko*
Charles University, Evangelical Theological Faculty, Prague, Czech Republic
vyacheslav.lytvynenko@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper offers a textual analysis, Slavonic edition and English translation of the *Homily on the Man Born Blind* preserved in XIVth-century novoizvodnye triodion panegyrics. The homily is ascribed to Athanasius of Alexandria and is unknown among Greek sources.

Keywords

*Homily on the Man Born Blind* – novoizvodnye triodion panegyrics – Athanasius of Alexandria – Bulgarian homiliaries

Medieval Slavonic miscellanies are undoubtedly the most common type of book among Slavonic mss. While still insufficiently studied, they attract increasing attention from scholars, and one of the factors that drives the need for studying the content of miscellanies and producing individual descriptions is their transmission of Greek texts that are no longer extant in their originals. One of such texts is the *Homily on the Man Born Blind*, whose textual analysis, Slavonic edition and English translation are offered in this paper.

In the Slavonic mss, this writing is ascribed to Athanasius of Alexandria (296/8-373) and found among the set of homilies that formed a fixed corpus of
the so-called novoizvodnye triodion panegyrics. These panegyrics appeared in the 60-70s of XIVth century, and their origin is related to the monastic milieu of Mt. Athos in Greece. More specifically, they represent a special type of Bulgarian homiliaries that were formed out of newly translated Greek texts, many of which (though not all) were unknown to the Slavs before. In modern scholarship, the primary attention has been given to the menaion miscellanies, whereas the study of the panegyrics has been rather limited. Some of the most significant studies of the panegyrics were done by K. Ivanova⁴ and, more recently, by E. Mirčeva.⁵ One specific work that deals with this type of miscellany belongs to K. Ivanova and E. Velkovska, whose article bears a title indicative of the limited research in this field: “Preliminary Notes Concerning the History of Novoizvodnye Triodion Panegyrics in Mt. Athos.”⁶

Among the texts that formed part of the fixed corpus of the triodion panegyrics we find six homilies that are ascribed to Athanasius of Alexandria.⁷ As we have shown in an earlier study,⁸ most of these texts are translations from the known Greek originals. Two of them were possibly composed by Basil of Seleucia (d. ca 458), two others either again by Basil or John Chrysostom (349-407), or Athanasius. One text belongs to an anonymous author, and there

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1 K. Иванова, “Житийно-панегиричното наследство на Търновската книжовна школа в балканската ръкописна традиция” [K. Ivanova, “Living Panegyrical Legacy of the Tarnovo Literary School in the Balkan Manuscript Tradition”], in: Търновска книжовна школа (Втори международен симпозиум, Велико Търново, 20-23 май 1976), София, 1983, том 2, pp. 193-214. K. Иванова, “Новоизводните търновски сборници и въпросът за ролята на патриарх Евтий в техния превод” [“Novoizvodnye Miscellanies of Tarnovo and the Question of the Role Played by the Patriarch Euthymius in their Translation”], Старобългарска литература, 25-26 (1991), pp. 124-134; K. Иванова, “За календарните триодни сборници, писани в Хилендарския манастир” [On the Triodion Calendar Miscellanies Written in the Hilandar Monastery], Старобългаристика, 36/3 (2012), pp. 11-28.

2 Е. Мирчева, Староизводните и новоизводните сборници – преводи, редакции, преработки, книжовноезикови особености [E. Mirčeva, Staroizvodnye and Novoizvodnye Miscellanies: Translations, Redactions, Adaptations, and Literary Features], София, 2018.

3 K. Иванова, Е. Велковска, “Хилендарска рукопис № 404 (предварителные заметки к истории новоизводных Триодных панегириков на Афоне)” [“Hilandar Manuscript 404: Preliminary Notes Concerning the History of Novoizvodnye Triodion Panegyrics in Mt. Athos”], in: Афон и славянский мир (Материалы международной научной конференции, посвященной 1000-летию присутствия русских на Святой Горе, Белград, 16-18 мая, 2013), Святая ГораАфон, 2014, pp. 235-255.

4 Иванова, “Житийно-панегиричното наследство,” р. 198.

5 В.В. Литвиненко, И.М. Грицевская, “Триодные гомилии псевдо-Афанасия Александрийского в новоизводных болгарских панегириках (гомилиариях)” [V.V. Lytvynenko, I.M. Gritsevska, “Triodion Homilies of Pseudo-Athanasius of Alexandria in the Novoizvodnye Bulgarian Panygyrics (Homiliaries)"], forthcoming in Palaeobulgaria.
is one whose Greek original we did not find, namely, the *Homily on the Man Born Blind*.

Ivanova is aware of ten ms copies with the novoizvodnye triodion panegyrics (of which five are Bulgarian and five Serbian), whose dating ranges from the very origin of this miscellany up to the end of the XIVth century. However, most of these mss do not have the entire cycle of the triodion readings, offering only parts of it instead. We know of only three ms copies of the XIVth-century triodion panegyric that contain the *Homily on the Man Born Blind*. The present study and edition of this homily is based on these three mss listed below:

1. Hilandar Monastery, 404, dated to 1370-1380/1385. Bulgarian orthography (henceforth Hil. 404).
2. Hilandar Monastery, 389, last quarter of XIV century. Serbian (Raški) orthography (henceforth Hil. 389).
3. Rilla Monastery, 4/7, the 80s of XIV. Bulgarian orthography (henceforth Ril. 4/7).

Ivanova and Velkovska made a number of important points concerning these mss. They suggest that novoizvodnye triodion panegyrics are completely fixed on the level of incipits and corpus of texts, representing thus a closed textual

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6 Иванова, Велковска, “Хиландарская рукопись № 404,” p. 238.
7 Digital scans of the Hilandar ms were provided by the Hilandar Research Library & the Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies at the Ohio State University, USA. We express deep gratitude to the monks of the Hilandar Monastery in Mt. Athos and the colleagues at the OSU for the possibility of working with these electronic copies.
8 The differences in the dating vary in different authors, but not much: (1) 1370-1380 is the dating given by Đ. Богдановић, Каталог хирилских рукописа манастира Хиландара [D. Bogdanović, Catalogue of Cyrillic Manuscripts in the Hilandar Monastery], Београд, 1978, p. 158; (2) 1375-1385 is the dating given by P. Станковић, “Водени знаци хиландарских српских рукописних књига XIV века” [“Watermarks in the XIVth-century Serbian Manuscripts from the Hilandar”], in: Археографски прилози, Београд, 2000-2001, бр. 22/23, pp. 58-59.
9 This codex contains the flowery triodion or pentecostarion, forming a single whole with the Hilandar ms 388 that has the lenten triodion (Богдановић, Каталог хирилских рукописа, pp. 152-153).
10 Digital scans of this ms were provided from the electronic archive of the Faculty of Slavonic philology at Sofia University of St. Kliment Ohridski. We express deep gratitude to the monks of Rilla Monastery and the colleagues of Sofia University, especially И. Христовой-Шомовой, for the possibility of working with these electronic copies.
11 On the dating, see Иванова, Велковска, “Хиландарская рукопись № 404,” p. 239. For the description of this ms, see Б. Христова, Д. Караджова, А. Икономова, Български рукописи от XI-XVIII век запазени в България: Своден каталог [B. Khristova, D. Karadžova, A. Ikonomova, Bulgarian Manuscripts of XI-XVIII preserved in Bulgaria: Comprehensive Catalogue], София, 1982, том 1, pp. 54.
12 Иванова, Велковска, “Хиландарская рукопись № 404.”
tradition. Furthermore, Hil. 404, in their view, is a draft ms containing a draft form of miscellany’s corpus, though not of the translation of texts. The order of texts here is not yet fixed and rather chaotic, while in the later copies these texts would be arranged according to the church calendar. The scribe explains the disorder of texts by the fact that he did not receive the originals necessary for the timely copying (Простите простите. Не въ непрѣлежениѥ, нѫ неполученѥ иꙁвод <с>нце не въ рѧⷣ прѣⷣлежѫѫӈ книги словѧ списатьѡ). The question of where these originals came from remains unclear. Zograf Monastery and the Monastery of Great Lavra in Mt. Athos are two likely places. What is clear, however, is that Hil. 404 was the protograph (or one of the protographs) for all other novoizvodnye triodion panegyrics.

With Hil. 404 as the base text, our collation of the Homily of the Man Born Blind in the three mss made it possible to confirm the idea of the closed textual tradition of these miscellanies. Most of the differences between the mss are orthographical. Hil. 389 exhibits the features of Serbian orthography that distinguishes it from the other two mss with the Bulgarian orthography. According to Ivanova, the texts initially written in Bulgarian were transcribed with the Serbian orthography at the Hilandar Monastery, and she finds this reflected in the ms of the Hilandar Monastery 392 (henceforth Hil. 392), which the scribe named Iov copied from Hil. 404 between the years 1375 and 1385. This ms, however, does not contain the flowery portion of the cycle, and for that reason, Hil. 389 represents the earliest textual version of the panegyrics with Serbian orthography. In Ivanova’s opinion, the Serbian transcription of Hil. 392 was done with absolute precision and consistency, and we found that the same is true of Hil. 389.14

We found only one significant lexical difference between the two Bulgarian mss on the one hand, and the Serbian ms on the other. Both of the Bulgarian mss use two related terms, ꙁамꙋдѣнїе and ꙁамꙋуждааше. Slavonic dictionaries provide an entry for ꙁамꙋуждати (trans. “to delay” or “slow down”), but not for ꙁамꙋуждавати. However, the -вати forms of the verb stressing the indefinite aspect were quite common.16 The imperfect form of this archaic verb, ꙁамꙋуждавааше, appearing first in Hil. 404, was rejected in both later

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13 “Forgive me, forgive me! For it is not by ignorance but because of not having received the manuscripts [on time] that I copied the homilies in this book without giving them proper order” (Hil. 404, f. 7v).
14 Иванова, Велковска, “Хиландарская рукопись № 404,” p. 236.
15 See e.g., Словарь старославянского языка: а-и [Dictionary of the Old Slavonic Language: a-i], Санкт-Петербург, 2006, rep. изд., том 1, p. 648.
16 А. Вайан, Руководство по старославянскому языку [Handbook of the Old Slavonic Language], пер. с французского В.В. Бородич, Москва, 1952.
mss. In Ril. 4/7, the scribe made a mistake in copying this verb and corrected it interlinearly: ꙁамоужⷣаⷡаⷶше. In the Serbian mss both cognate words were changed to ꙁакьснѣвааше and ꙁакьснѣнїе.

One feature that makes Hil. 404 and Ril. 4/7 related to each other and different from Hil. 389 is the marginal gloss found in the Bulgarian mss next to the account of the Pharisees’ reaction: вѫскврьнныъ оѫстьнъ, калѡмь прїемши хаⷭ
нарицаахоу (“with their defiled mouths, they called Christ a dirt-maker”). Since there are no scribal marks in the text of either Bulgarian mss, this gloss could be perceived as a commentary that stood apart from the text, whereas in Hil. 389 it was integrated into the text from the margin. One other feature peculiar only to Hil. 389 is the statement калѡмь прїемши иꙋбавленїе (“he received deliverance [from blindness] by means of clay”), as opposed to калѡмь прїемши исправленїе (“he received correction [of sight] by means of clay”) in Hil. 404 and Ril. 4/7. Since the words иꙋбавленїе and исправленїе appear quite similar in form, the change in the Serbian manuscript could be as simple as the scribe’s misreading of the initial term. However, if the change was intentional, it may indicate the fact that the scribe misunderstood the main idea of the episode in which the emphasis is not so much on the deliverance from blindness as on repairing (исправлениє) nature’s failure.

In examining the content of the text, several points should be highlighted. First, the Homily on the Man Born Blind contains a rhetorical introduction whose points are not supported in the rest of the writing. Second, the text as a whole has a number of units that appear quite complete in themselves with each one interpreting chapter 9 of John’s Gospel. The text composition as a whole could be briefly presented as follows:

1. **Rhetorical Introduction** (sect. I.1-2). Here, we find an analogy between the road-side shelters (припѫтныъ сѣни) designed to give comfort from the weariness of traveling and the Church as a shelter of rest for those who are troubled by worldly cares. Just as a human host takes in the travelers, so does Christ, the host of strangers (страннопрїемец, дѡмоувⷣлка), provide them with spiritual refuge on their life path (по житеискомоу пѫти хѡдѧщїиⷯ оустрои сѧ).

2. **The Fate of the Man Blind from Birth** (sect. II.3) This section briefly describes the fact that the blind man lacked both food and sight, curiously pointing out that his mind was as quick to action as the movement of a deer (раꙁоумом же быстра ꙗкоже сръна).

3. **Praise to Nature** (sect. III.4-7). Here, nature (естⷭтво) is praised as a means by which the blind man receives sight and as that which reveals Christ to be both God and Creator. In addition, a connection is drawn between the action in which Adam was formed from the dust of the ground and the
action in which ground was used by Christ to make clay as a means of performing the blind man’s healing.

4. **Supreme Submission of the Blind Man and his Healing** (sect. IV.8-13). This section begins with the praise to the Lord for slowing down his grace (ꙁамоуждавааше же влⷣка блгⷣть) as a way of showing that it was supreme submission that “crowned” the blind man (славаю въннаваж бѣгопро-

καратво). Then follows a set of negative examples conjectured as possible responses that lack submission to the action of Christ in anointing the blind man’s eyes with clay. And we also read about the response from the surrounding people who saw the blind man “rejoicing and leaping” (рⷣуѫща сѧ и скачѧща), as he went about proclaiming the miracle of healing.

5. **Pharisees Interrogate the Blind Man: Part One** (sect. V.14-18). Here, we have an account of the first part of the Pharisees’ interrogation of the formerly blind man. They are described as seeking a way to accuse Christ of making the healing (облъгати ищѫⷮ исцѣленїе), failing to recognize a connection between the fact that God used clay to create Adam and Christ used it to give sight. It is said that the Pharisees put themselves into a logical contradiction: “If Christ broke the Sabbath, then how is it that the blind man was healed? And if the miracle was fake, then how could he break the Sabbath without having done anything?”

6. **Pharisees Interrogate the Blind Man: Part Two** (sect. V.19-29). The second part of the interrogation talks about the trap that the Pharisees set for the blind man: he had nothing but either to say that the law was not good or to insult Christ on account of the healing made on the Sabbath. The responses of the blind man are then compared to those of the Apostle Paul given to Agrippa (Acts 26:1-32), and it is said that the blind man proved himself to be self-consecrated to divine service even ahead of Paul (Саморѫкополѡжникъ покаꙁа сѧ прѣжде павла). The Pharisees’ interrogation is depicted as causing suffering to the blind man, but after having demonstrated proper resistance, “he is to be praised above all virtuous people” (бл҃гохваленїи въсѣⷯ добрѣишихъ). Instead of recognizing that Christ was simply a prophet, the blind man pronounces an extended statement in which he confesses him to be above all other prophets of whom Moses prophesied long ago.

7. **Conclusion** (sect. VII.30-31). The homily ends with a rhetorical conclusion in which the reader is called to follow the good example of the faithful blind man. He is encouraged to purify his eyes from the spiritual darkness, keep the divine commands, and go on doing good deeds in love toward the Lord, who is God “that gives light” and sanctifies “every man coming into the world” (cf. John 19). Notably, the conclusion says nothing that would support any points stated in the introduction.
With this summary of the text, it is important to point out that the homily is enhanced with various rhetorical techniques. The introduction demonstrates what in modern scholarship is called “word-weaving” (from Slavonic: “pletenie sloves”), a high literary style forged “by the use of cognate and sound-like words, assonances, synonymy and speech rhymes in order to produce a peculiar verbally decorated effect”\(^ {17} \) (see τρούδη and ποτή). Other parts of the text include numerous other rhetorical devices, especially appeals, invocations, allusions, analogies, metaphors, parallelisms, moral instructions, and speeches spoken on behalf of different characters – both real ones (such as the blind man and the Pharisees), and imaginary (such as anyone exhibiting a lack of submission to Christ).

In our search for textual correspondence of the Slavonic homily with a Greek source, we examined the following material:

| Table 1: Homilies on the Blind Man’s Healing from John 9:1-41 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Asterius of Amasea**                                       |
| *In caecum a nativitate (Homilia 7).* Inc.: Ἡκούσαμεν ἀρτίως τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς βροντῆς Ἰωάννου (CPG 3260; PG 40.249-263). |
| **John Chrysostom**                                          |
| *De caeco nato.* Inc.: Πηγὴ φωτὸς ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος (CPG 4582; PG 59.543-554). According to H.D. Altendorf, Untersuchungen zu Severian von Gabala, Tübingen, 1957, pp. 52-63, this homily belongs to Severian of Gabala. |
| **John Chrysostom**                                          |
| *In caecum a nativitate.* Inc.: Ἡκούσαμεν ἀρτίως τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς βροντῆς Ἰωάννου (CPG 3260; PG 40.249-263). |
| **John Chrysostom**                                          |
| *In caecum a nativitate.* Inc.: Ἡκούσαμεν ἀρτίως τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς βροντῆς Ἰωάννου (CPG 3260; PG 40.249-263). |
| **John Chrysostom**                                          |
| *In caecum a nativitate.* Inc.: Ἡκούσαμεν ἀρτίως τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς βροντῆς Ἰωάννου (CPG 3260; PG 40.249-263). |

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\(^{17}\) Д.С. Лихачев, *Исследования по древнерусской литературе* [Studies on Old Russian Literature], Ленинград, 1987, p. 46.
### Table 1 Homilies on the Blind Man's Healing from John 9:1-41 (cont.)

| Author                        | Homily Title                              | Incipits                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grottaferrata, MS B.α.14 [gr. 178]; Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Vat. gr. 455, ff. 75r-77v; Aubineau, *Codices Chrysostomici Graeci*, pp. 39, 15. | *Homilia in caecum a nativitate.* Inc.: Πολυσπούδαστόν ἐστι πάσιν ἀνθρώποις (CPG 2272 [Pseudo-Athanasius]; CPG 7409 [Timothy of Jerusalem]; CPG 7900.12 [Leontius of Byzantium]; PG 28.1001-1024). |
| Pseudo-Athanasius of Alexandria |                                           | Homilia in caecum a nativitate.                                            |
| Timothy of Jerusalem         |                                           | Homilia in caecum a nativitate.                                            |
| Leontius of Byzantium        |                                           | Homilia in caecum a nativitate.                                            |
| Severian of Gabala           |                                           | Homilia in caecum a nativitate.                                            |
| Theophilius of Alexandria    |                                           | Homilia de caeco a nativitate (fragmentum) (Arabic version).               |

### Table 2 Greek Commentaries on the Blind Man's Healing from John 9:1-41

| Author                        | Commentary Title                          | Incipits                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Euthymios Zigabenos           | *Expositio in Ioannem*                   | (PG 129.1305-1320).                                                      |
| John Chrysostom               | *In Iohannem homiliae LVI-LIX* (CPG 4425; PG 59.305-327). |                                                                         |
| Origen of Alexandria          | *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis* (E. Preuschen, ed., *Der Johanneskommentar*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, 10, Berlin, 1903, Band 4, pp. 3-479; PG 14.21-830). | A commentary on ch. 9 of John's Gospel is missing, but some fragments are preserved in catenae (see table 3). |
| Cyril of Alexandria           | *Commentarius in Ioannis Evangelium* (CPG 5208. PG 73.939-1019) |                                                                         |
| Theophylact of Ohrid           | *Enarratio in Evangelium Joannis* (PG 123.1127-1348). | The commentary does not go beyond ch. 7 of John's Gospel.               |
Table 3  Greek Exegetical Catenae on the Blind Man’s Healing from John 9:3-41

| Anonymous writer          | B. Cordier, ed., *Catena patrum graecorum in Santum Joannem*, Antverpiae, 1630, Capita IX, pp. 246, 252, 258-260. |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ammonius                  | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 247, 249, 253, 257, 259-260; J. Reuss, ed., *Johannes-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche aus Katenenhand-schriften gesammelt und herausgegeben*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, 89, Berlin, 1966, esp. frag. 317, p. 276. |
| Apollinaris of Laodicea   | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 250, 253, 255-256; Reuss, *Johannes-kommentare*, esp. frag. 49, p. 21. |
| John Chrysostom           | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 247, 249, 252-253, 255-259. |
| Isidore                   | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, p. 246. |
| Cyril of Alexandria      | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 246-247, 249-253, 258. |
| Origen                    | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 251, 256, 258; Preuschen, *Der Johanneskommentar*, frags. 131-135, pp. 571-572. |
| Severus of Antioch        | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 247-248, 250, 260. |
| Theodore of Heraclea      | Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 247, 251, 260; J.A. Cramer, ed., *Catenea in Evangelia S. Lucae et S. Joannis*, Oxonii, 1844, p. 296; Reuss, *Johannes-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, frags. 71-82, pp. 85-87. |
| Theodore of Mopsuestia    | Cramer, *Catenea in Evangelia*, p. 296; Cordier, *Catena patrum graecorum*, Capita IX, pp. 248, 254, 258, 260-261; I.-M. Vosté, ed., *Theodori Mopsuesteni commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis Apostoli*, Syr. IV.3, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 115; Scriptores Syri, 62, Leuven, 1949, 9.1-41, pp. 181-195. |

Based on our analysis of this material, we can affirm that the Homily on the Man Born Blind is not identified among these sources. For that reason, it could be either a translation of the now lost Greek original, or perhaps a compilation.
of unidentified Greek texts. The homily exhibits numerous syntactical and lexical calques from Greek, though it is also possible that a Slavonic scribe from this time period could have stylized the text.\textsuperscript{18} Even though Slavonic MSS ascribe the homily to Athanasius of Alexandria, we did not find any textual parallels with either his genuine writings or pseudographic ones. We identified thirteen instances in seven genuine writings\textsuperscript{19} where Athanasius refers to the story of the blind man’s healing, but none of them offer more than a simple allusion, and most of them are used to argue that Christ’s power to restore sight proves him to be God. The pseudo-Athanasian \textit{Homily on the Man Born Blind} (\textit{Homilia in caecum a nativitate} CPG 7409; PG 28.1001-1024, see table 1) gives no textual parallels with the Slavonic text either.

The homily incorporates a number of themes that are commonplace in Greek exegesis.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, the fact that clay was used as a means for healing is often employed to show that Christ who healed the blind was also the Creator who made Adam from the dust of the ground (e.g., Origen,\textsuperscript{21} Ammonius,\textsuperscript{22} Pseudo-Athanasius,\textsuperscript{23} John Chrysostom)\textsuperscript{24}. An even more recurrent point in Greek exegesis is the argument that healing of the blind man proves Christ’s

\begin{enumerate}
\item For the phenomenon of stylization in the Slavonic medieval literature originating with the literary reforms of the Patriarch Euthymius in the xivth century in Tarnovo, see e.g., В.Д. Петрова, “Проблемы исихазма и древнеславянского ‘плетение словес’ в современной филологии” [“Problems of Hesychasm and Old Slavonic ‘Word-weaving’ in Contemporary Philology”], Вестник Чувашского университета, 1, (2011), 251-257.
\item Oratio contra Arianos, 332; 340; 341; 355 (K. Metzler, K. Savvidis, eds., \textit{Die Dogmatischen Schriften: Oratio III contra Arianos} [Athanasius Werke], Berlin, 2000, Band 1, Teil 1, Lieferung 3, pp. 343; 351-352; 352; 366); Tomus ad Antiochenos, 7 (H.C. Brennecke, U. Heil, A. Stockhausen, eds., \textit{Die “Apologien”} [Athanasius Werke], Berlin, 2006, Band 2, Lieferung 8, p. 347); Epistula festalis, 1.4 (year 339) (PG 26.1406c-c); Epistula ad Adelphium, 3 (K. Savvidis, ed., \textit{Die Dogmatischen Schriften: Epistulae Dogmaticae Minores} [Athanasius Werke], Berlin, 2016, Band 1, Teil 1, Lieferung 5, p. 745); De Incarnatione Verbi, 18; 23; 38; 49 (R.W. Thomson, \textit{Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione}, Oxford, 1971, pp. 179; 191; 229; 257); Historia Arianorum, 61 (H.-G. Opitz, ed., \textit{Die “Apologien:” Historia Arianorum 32,2 – De synodis 13,2} [Athanasius Werke], Berlin, 2011, Band 11, Lieferung 6, repr., p. 217); De decretis Nicaenae synodi, 1 (H.-G. Opitz, ed., \textit{Die “Apologien:” De decretis Nicaenae synodi 1,5-40,24} [Athanasius Werke], Berlin, 2012, Band 11, Lieferung 1, repr., pp. 1-2).
\item For a helpful overview of the major patristic themes of exegesis on the healing of the blind, see J.C. Elowsky, ed., \textit{Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament IVa, John 1-10}, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2007, pp. 318-336.
\item Preuschen, \textit{Der Johanneskommentar}, frag. 63, pp. 533-534.
\item Reuss, \textit{Johannes-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche}, frag. 317, p. 276.
\item \textit{Homilia in caecum a nativitate}, 4 (PG 28.1008a).
\item \textit{In Iohannem homiliae}, 56 (PG 59.307-308).
\end{enumerate}
divinity (e.g., Pseudo-Athanasius,25 Cyril of Alexandria,26 John Chrysostom)27. The motifs related to the logical traps and tricky questions from the Pharisees are especially elaborated in the commentary on the Gospel of John by Cyril of Alexandria.28 At the same time, the homily offers a handful of motifs that appear unique. Most significantly, it compares the blind man to the Apostles Peter and Paul; develops an idea of “slowed down grace;” and considers the Pharisaic interrogation of the blind in terms of sufferings that he had to endure for his faith and obedience to Christ.

In what follows, we will offer the Slavonic text of the homily based on three mss (with Hil. 404 as a base text) along with the English translation. In rendering the Slavonic text, we made an effort to produce a literal translation that would reflect the nuances of Slavonic syntax and terminology (such as four different words for “ground:” калъ-mud, пръсть-dirt, землѧ-ground, and бренїе-clay). All biblical citations (if not allusions) are given in italics. The text and translation are preceded by two tables: one for the mss sigla and one for the abbreviations.

**Sigla**

A | HM.SMS. 404, ff. 241v(a)-242v(a)
B | Rila Monastery 4/7, ff. 271r-273v
C | HM.SMS. 389, ff. 334v-339v

**Abbreviations**

Ad = ad | According to
Cf. = confer | Compare
Emend. = emendavit | Emendation
Eras. = erasit | Erased
In marg. = in margine | In margin
I.t. = in textu | In the text
Lig. = ligatura | Ligature
Lit. = ad litteram | Literally
Mac. ob. = macula obscuratur | Shaded stain
Sic. = sic erat scriptum | Thus, note
Sup. = superscriptum | Written above the line
> | Omitted

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25 Homilia in caecum a nativitate, 4 (PG 28.1008a).
26 Commentarius in Ioannis Evangelium, lib. 4, 9:33 (PG 73.1005b).
27 De caeco nato, 4 (PG 59.549).
28 Commentarius in Ioannis Evangelium, lib. 4, 9:1-41 (CPG 5208. PG 73.939-1019).
Our Holy Father Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria. Homily on the Man Blind from Birth. Bless us, Father:

1. The travelers' hardships are relieved by the road-side shelters that provide comfort from the hardships of traveling upon receiving the weary. Since we too live as if walking on a certain life path, with many sufferings along this path, God granted us prayer shelters everywhere in order to provide relief not only from life's hardships but much more so from those that have to do with the soul. That is, if anyone is troubled by the worldly cares, he finds rest on entering the church.

2. A host that finds himself placed along the life path takes in those who journey on this path of life and provides them with rest in manifold bedrooms from traveling filled with much sorrow. But here, if you enter a shelter

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29 Ὁψε--; ἤδ: C
30 ἄνομοι; νέας: C
31 ἄνομοι: της: C
32 κοινάς: νέας C
33 κοινάς: κας: C
34 να: C
35 ἀνομοῖ: νέας: C
36 ὁδοί: της: C
37 τοὺς ὁδούς: κ. β.
of repentance as a sinner, you will be received by the supreme Apostle and key-keeper who will lead you to the eternal shelter. If you become burdened by the sorrows of this life and riches, Paul will immediately take away your burden by saying, “For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out” (1Tim. 6:7). If you come overwhelmed by trouble and turn to prayer, you will rise as if from a soft bed. In this, Christ is different [from others] as a host and maker of the salvation gift to all, for he governs human life as if it were his own house of which he is a steward and takes great care of all who journey on the life path by making them settled.

II.3. Thus, having once seen a man whose eyes were blind but whose mind was as quick [to action] as [the movement of] a deer, he saw a light in him and a ground [lit. “food”] for confusion. For as his hands reached out for food, [it was clear that his] eyes were unable to grasp the light. Nor did he have any consolation at night, for his vision was darkened from birth, his eyes were flawed from the womb. He suffered affliction in this way for years, for the disease was in the body for

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38 къвѣнъкъ -ниче С
39 вѣрѣнѣнѣнѣ -лѣча B
40 гѣлъ -гѣе С
41 иако ниже -иакоже С
42 сѣпѣо -нива B, -нива B
43 иако -иако C
44 иѣкако -ѣкѣе B
III.4. But as it sometimes happens, trouble [led] to the blissful experience of mercy, for something sacred happened to the blind that brought [him] joy over the [re]-birth of his eyes effected by the most holy hands of the Lord.

5. Oh, blessed eyes, nurtured not from the seed of nature but by grace! Now I am praising the nature that failed, for having failed, it revealed the Creator! Now I am praising the nature that closed the eyes, for it manifested God's deeds through itself!

6. Thus, it revealed the one who mysteriously makes [and] fashions the eyes that are formed in the womb and the one that made the blind see by means of [his] fashioning. [It revealed him] when [the blind] received correction
7. And having his eyes opened, he cried out to Creator: You created me, Lord, and "laid your hand on me" (Psalm 139:5). You wished nature to cause blindness and have the Lord's hand that gives recovery of sight to rest upon [me].

VI.8. Now, while the [blind's] eyes sense the coming healing of pupils and desire to worship, the Lord slows down [the action of] grace. For by means of word he subdues affliction, prolongs the expectation and delay. For at first comes the action with the mud, and then [the blind] receives the anointment on the eyes. Having received it, he is commanded to hurry to [of sight] by means of mud as [Christ] touched him, like he once did in creating Adam, clearly showing that he is Adam's Creator. For by means of [transformation of] nature worthy of remembrance and from the [action] of the Maker of wisdom, soon came a testimony that appeared as a sign from the old, as he saw him [with his spiritual eyes] taking dirt and breathing out the saliva, and recognized Adam's Maker hidden in the body.
9. Indeed, I am marveled even by his initial faith, for when mud was applied to the eyes for healing, he showed no sign of ridicule. And being blind and sensing the mud with his hands, he did not yell to the Lord saying: “Are you not [causing] another damage, sir, when you apply [this] medicine to my eyes for healing the blindness? For no one who has clear eyes will no longer keep seeing after having them anointed with mud! How then hoping now to receive sight shall I accept the healing that makes even those who see blind?”

10. But, as I said, in following the command, the blind remained faithful, and in that he showed a firm faith. This then is the best case of faith and is worthy to be recognized with amazement [for] how he was commanded to hurry to Siloam with mud [on himself] and did not become angry with
the words of Jesus, but on hearing that he had to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash, he immediately fulfilled what was commanded.

11. For the Gospel says that he went and washed, and on coming back, he received sight on account of his fervent faith [and] God-loving obedience. For he did not say to Christ as someone else would say: “Who are you, sir, to be placing mud on my eyes, as if plastering the wall?” But instead, the blind silenced all such words and headed on with muddy eyes, as if proclaiming the words of David: “Open my eyes and I will understand the wonders of your law” (Ps. 119:18).

12. Having washed off the mud and received the bodily sight, he lost no time for the instruction of the soul. But like Paul, he was filled with pious boldness toward the Jews – to those who encountered him, he displayed his sight, and with those who were sitting nearby, he kept no silence in sharing about healing. He filled the streets and neighborhoods with singing. He proclaimed the miracle to those who did
13. All those who heard him and saw him rejoicing and leaping from the fact that he had true natural sight, said to themselves: “Is this not he who used to sit and beg? Some said: ‘yes’, whereas others said that he looked like him. But he said: “I am he” (John 9:8b-9).

V. 14. The Pharisees quarreled over him, for they thought that it was sin for the blind to receive sight. And there gathered a great assembly, for it is said that Jews led the one who once was blind to the Pharisees, and the Jewish community interrogated him as if he were a criminal: “How did you receive sight? Is this not from some kind of insanity that your eyes became blind?” In this way, he was tested on how he received sight [and] if there was anyone who saw him [and] had an objection as to how he received sight. But he replied with boldness: “The man called Jesus, made clay and anointed my eyes, and said: ‘Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam’. So, I went and washed and received sight” (John 9:11).

15. That is what the one who was genuinely blind tells you, oh Pharisees. So, listen to us too, you, whose rational...
eyes are blinded! This was the way the blind, who is prosecuted by you now, received sight. Just as Adam was created with clay, so now too God took dirt from the ground and spit and put it on the eyes of the blind, and he began to see.

16. [Investigating] how he received sight, they seek to advance false accusations against the healing [and] declare to move on, forgetting the fact that [the blind] received sight.

17. This examination took place in order to frighten the blind. For it was their idea to frighten the faithful and hurl some type of words that would bring false accusations against Christ. But as they saw that the blind was not frightened and the healing appeared innocent, the extortioners turned to [the idea of] Sabbath abuse. “This man”, as it is said, “is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath” (John 9:16).

18. They put forth charges again, [arguing that only] insane and sightless [could] agree with the blind, whereas it would have been more fitting for them to accept the words of the Lord. [Indeed], if he broke Sabbath, then
how do you explain that the blind was healed? And if the miracle was fake, then how did he break Sabbath without having done anything? The Pharisees [had to] either bow before the miracle or bring accusations against the breaking of Sabbath. But [their] zealous soul [made them believe] that both Sabbath was broken, and no miracle occurred.

VI.19. Moreover, being unhappy either with this second evil or with the first, they said to the blind, as it is stated: "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened" (John 9:17). The reason they questioned him on whether [Jesus] opened his eyes was that he said earlier "he put a clay on my eyes, and I washed and began to see" (John 9:11). Yet the evil scheme of their made-up question is revealed as we read aloud: "It was your eyes he opened. What have you to say about him?" (John 9:17). This is said as if they accepted that such a thing truly happened [and as if they suggested]: "so, let us suppose that you did receive sight, and..."
By their defiled mouths [filled] with curses of condemnation, they cursed Christ by calling him a dirt-maker. They fell into affliction and in turn found judgment on themselves from the one they condemned.

You made a worthy response again to those people [lit. souls] regarding your sight, oh supremely wise blind, for you said to them: “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?” (John 9:27). For I believe that to speak to the deaf is fraught with peril. What profit is there for me from what was previously said? What fruit is there from what has been spoken? It has been
22. This blind man instructs about Christ ahead of the teacher, Peter. He showed himself to be self-consecrated to divine service ahead of Paul, for it was slightly later that Paul was responding to the accusations of the Jews, as it is said. The blind anticipated these [two] as he trumpeted [about the miracle] at the Jewish trial court.

23. Remember here also Paul's speech to Agrippa (cf. Acts 26:1-32). For Paul was brought before the court, and Jewish priests put forth accusations. At both trials, Agrippa listened to [the charges], and Paul won the case in responding to numerous rumors. Agrippa was amazed at the power of the words. Paul, he said, "Do you [want] to persuade me to be a Christian in such a short time? Paul replied to him: 'Short time or long – I would pray that not only perceived as a lie by all. All my words have finally been exhausted, as you have turned a deaf ear to my words. So, if you treat me as do the judges from a court seat, you will see me voiceless to answering. [But] if you abandon your position of a judge and be willing to become disciples, I will remember the miracle and see myself speaking to the prudent. Tell [me] then, do you want to be his disciples?"
24. Compare the blind with Paul, and you will find similarities. [Compare] the phrase that Paul said to Agrippa, “I pray that those who listen to me would become like I am” (Acts 26:29) with what [said] the blind “Do you want to become his disciples too?” (John 9:27).

The words spoken by the blind to the Jews overturned the hope of the judges, for they schemed a punishment, hoping to force him into trouble by the fear of accusations. The other one sought to show the true discipleship to those who had a vain hope. By means of convincing account and response, he led to despair those with [vain] hope and made it impossible for them to object as if they were [struck] by a bad wound.

25. For what does the Gospel say: “Then they reproached him and said to him, ‘You are this fellow’s disciple, but we are disciples of Moses!’” (Acts 26:28). The reproach of the Pharisees failed to be effective and instead, it crowned the blind [for his resistance] to their mocking of his being Christ’s disciple.
Being judged on account of Christ, he did not give up and desired him in the time of trouble. It is on him I urge you to rely as well!

26. What an insult the blessed [and] most holy blind had to bear in the face of charges, himself being an honest man, who after having delighted in [his] deeds is [to be] praised above all virtuous people! May we, oh blind, partake of such offenses.

27. To say then that the law is not good would be [to make] an impious statement and a slander against the Mosaic commandments. And to judge the healing is lawless if you are full of gratitude to Christ.

28. But assessing the danger of the struggle in the midst of trial, he gave a fairly proper answer: "If you want me, oh Pharisees, to speak about him, he is the Prophet of whom great Moses prophesied. He is the One! If you expect me to give my own judgment, I affirm that this man is greater than all other prophets. For if God were not in him, I would have not received sight after coming out of Siloam. For that man, as I already said, spoke to me rather authoritatively: ‘Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam and you will receive sight’" (cf. John 9:11).
29. Oh judge, in acknowledging Christ and the law, acknowledge Christ – whom they said was the law-breaker – to be called Prophet. Honor the law, ascribing to God whatever is according to the law. For the prophets acted based on the gift of that law.

VII.30. So, let us too receive sight [to see] the good [example] of the faithful blind and purify ourselves from the earthly darkness! [Let us] stay away from the material and false and dark vanity [of this world]! And having purified the eyes [lit. pupils], may we clothe our mind with vigilance! And as we bear these fruits by keeping the divine commands, the sun will enlighten us toward truth. May we, together with the faithful blind, love the Lord Jesus in order to do good deeds, and turn to him with our whole soul and heart, and cry out to him with fervor: “We believe, Lord, that you are the God who gives light and sanctifies every man coming into the world” (cf. John 1:9).

31. And let us worship him with much fear and awe, for he is worthy of all praise, honor and worship, together
with the unoriginate Father and most holy and life-giving Spirit. Now and forever and in the ages to come. Amen.

Acknowledgement

Viacheslav V. Lytvynenko’s work on this article was funded by the Charles University Research Center Program No. 204/053.

This paper is part of the larger project aimed at identifying and classifying all texts (both genuine and pseudographic) that are ascribed to Athanasius of Alexandria in the Slavonic tradition. The end goal of this project will be a book, Slavonic Athanasiana.

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