

AFTERLIFE OF THE 2 ENOCH CALENDAR: MAJOR CHRISTIAN FEASTS ON THE SIXTH DAY

BASIL LOURIÉ, *St. Petersburg, Russia*

When calling our calendar “the calendar of 2 Enoch” we do not mean that the text of 2 Enoch could have been involved in any way in the transmission of the corresponding calendar to the settings mentioned below. On the contrary, it is rather obvious that the calendar itself was transmitted through different media, and so, we have to wait for its appearances outside 2 Enoch.

Baptism of Christ on 6.IV “according to the computation of Jews” in Origen

According to 2 Enoch, 6.IV is the day of Enoch’s second ascension and also Enoch’s birthday. This tradition is preserved in some fashion in Origen and applied to Christ.

In his *Homilies in Ezekiel*, 1:4 (commentary on Ezek 1:1) Origen deals with the date of the baptism of Christ in January, but in connection with the events of the Exodus (and with the text of Ex 12:2). In Exodus, of course, the events are placed within the first month, Nisan. Origen says that the baptism of Christ took place “in the fourth month from the new year according to the computation of Jews” (...*mensis quartus ab anno novo iuxta supputationem Hebraeorum*), but his “fourth month” is January.¹ The problem has been considered in detail by Dom Bernard Botte whose opinion is that there is, here, an unhelpful gloss of some later editor.²

Dom Botte’s guess seems less reasonable now, when we know more about the symmetry between the first and the seventh months of the late Jewish calendars and the early Christian calendars. There is no problem, in this liturgical context, in looking at the events of Passover through the festivals of autumn. For instance, in the early rite of Jerusalem the feast of the Holy Cross in September had the official name “Easter.”³

January could be the fourth month from October, but October has been roughly identified with Tishri in Asia Minor, and the same identification

¹ M. Borret, Origène, *Homélies sur Ezechiel* (Sources chrétiennes 352; Paris: Cerf, 1989), pp. 62-63.

² B. Botte, *Les origines de la Noël et de l’Épiphanie. Étude historique* (Textes et études liturgiques 1; Louvain: Abbaye du Mont César, 1932), p. 11.

³ According to the Jerusalem Georgian Lectionary (§§1234-1256), where the Georgian term for “Easter” is an older borrowing from Armenian (*zatik*). See M. Tarchnischvili, *Le grand Lectionnaire de l’Église de Jérusalem (V-VIII^e s.) II* (CSCO 204-205, Scriptorum Iberici, tt. 13-14; Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1960), pp. 36-40, 42-48; esp. §1255: “In - Encaeniarum medio Zatiki, quae Dominica fuerit...” (pp. 40, 47).

occurred in 2 Enoch where Siwan is June (and so, Tishri must be October, not September).

The date of the baptism of Christ is the day of his temporary disappearance into the desert. Indeed, the disappearance of Enoch on 6.IV is permanent, unlike his first ascension 90 days earlier. Nevertheless, there is hardly any doubt that both traditions of the events that take place with a messianic figure on 6.IV are related. Origen's reference to some "computation of Jews" is here especially revealing.

A 60-day cycle between the baptism of Christ and the nativity feast in Epiphanius

The plot of the Enoch narrative in 2 Enoch has, at least, one calendrical parallel in the Christian tradition. It is known from a unique source of the late fourth-century, Epiphanius of Cyprus' *Panarion*, LI, 16.⁴

According to Epiphanius, sharing the majority opinion of his time, the Nativity of Christ took place on January 6, and on the same day, but many years later, the miracle in Cana occurred, that is, the first miracle of Christ and the beginning of his preaching to the people. However, the baptism of Christ took place 60 days before the miracle in Cana, that is, *a. d. VI Id. Nov.* (on the 6th day before the Ides of November), November 8. Between the day of the baptism and that of the miracle in Cana Christ did not appear to the people. Epiphanius tries to guess what Christ was doing these 60 days.⁵ It is clear, from Epiphanius' explanation, that in his counting of 60 days he uses the inclusive counting when he includes the day of Cana in the

⁴ K. Holl, "Epiphanius, *Panarion*. Haer. 34-64. 2. bearb. Aufl. von J. Dummer," GCS 31 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980), pp. 270-272. This passage is simply frustrating for the majority of scholars; cf. Holl, p. 270 (note by K. Holl); W. Hartke, *Über Jahrespunkte und Feste insbesondere das Weihnachtfest* (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Schriften der Sektion für Altertumswissenschaft 16; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956), pp. 24-25, 96-98; A. Strobel, *Ursprung und Geschichte des frühchristlichen Osterkalenders* (TU 121; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1977), p. 99, Anm. 1, 150; and A. de Halleux, "La Nativité et l'Épiphanie dans le dialogue unioniste du VIIe au XIVe siècle," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 68 (1992), pp. 5-37 (13 n. 40). In my earlier attempt to reconstruct the calendar underlying the corresponding tradition I was trying to harmonize Epiphanius' data with the pentacontad cycles. Such possibility is not to be excluded, but now I consider my attempt as rather unhelpful. See B. Lourié, Лурье, Три типа раннехристианского календаря и одно разночтение в тексте *Epistula Apostolorum*, in: *Традиции и наследие Христианского Востока*. Материалы международной конференции. Под ред. Д.Е. Афиногенова и А.В. Муравьева (Moscow: Indrik, 1996), pp. 256-320 (304 n. 88).

⁵ These speculations of Epiphanius are almost of no interest to us because of the lack of precision in his computations. He assumes that Christ spent 40 days in the desert, then, "about" (μικρὸν πλεόν) two weeks (14 days) in Nazareth, then two days more spent with John the Baptist and two days more with Andrew, Simon and other disciples, then, one day more when he called up Philip and Nathanael, and, finally, the day of Cana that is the 60th. "About" in this text is a clear mark that there is no pretention here to explain a true calendrical *computus*.

number 60, and that he supposes that December contains 31 days, as in the Julian calendar.

Even in this form, a 60-day cycle between the birth of the messianic figure and his first appearance to the people has an obvious similarity with the plot of the Enoch narrative in 2 Enoch, despite the fact that, in the Enoch story, the whole cycle is longer and counts 90 days before the messianic figure's birthday. According to our Enoch story, 60 days before Enoch's birthday, 6.IV, Enoch still was in the heavens but started to write for the people the books that he had to reveal a bit later. Therefore, some parallel with Epiphanius' plot, even if a very remote one, could be traced.

Counting back in our calendar 60 days from 6.IV we arrive to 6.II (the third month contains 30 days, not 31; the day 6.IV itself is not included in the number of 60). This calendrical scheme, and certainly not the Julian calendar, seems to be the genuine setting of Epiphanius' story. The exclusive counting is the normal way of counting in the calendrical *computus*, and we have used it in our reconstruction of the 2 Enoch calendar. So, Epiphanius' counting is to be corrected so that the date of the baptism is November 6, not 8. It is worth noting that the use of the Roman (genuine) recension of the Julian calendar is a well-known source of errors in itself. Probably some pre-Epiphanian source has already confused "November 6" with "the 6th day before the Ides of November." "November" is here, in fact, the second month of some Jewish calendar where the first month could be roughly identified with October and the fourth month with January. This calendar is referred to independently by Origen in our previous case study.

Importance of the 2 Enoch calendar to the calendars of the Christian Church

Both Origen and Epiphanius, checked against the background of 2 Enoch, give us a strong reason to reopen the discussion as to the origin of the Christian Epiphany feast on January 6.

There are basically two approaches to this problem. The first, going back to Hermann Usener⁶ is often called *religionsgeschichtliche Hypothese*. It considers the Christian feasts on December 25 and January 6 as a replica of the pair of pagan feasts, "[Dies] Natalis Solis Invicti" and the birth of Aeon. The alternative approach is often called (mostly by its opponents) the "apologetic hypothesis." It consists in searching for the roots of the Epiphany in the early Christian traditions. One of the most recent authors writing on the origin of the feast on January 6 opts, once more, for the

⁶ H. Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Teil 1: *Das Weihnachtsfest* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1911).

religionsgeschichtliche Hypothese,⁷ notwithstanding the achievements of the supporters of the “apologetic hypothesis” in recent years.⁸

Taking into account the *supputatio Hebraeorum* going back to the 2 Enoch calendar, we can reframe the “apologetic hypothesis” from the larger perspective of the genesis of the Christian calendars. Thus, we can look for the origin of the Epiphany feast in the Jewish matrix of Christianity, that is, in the Jewish traditions of the Second Temple period.

The current majority opinion as to the origin of the Christian liturgical year⁹ presupposes a spontaneous generation of the Christian feasts and other memorial dates almost *ex nihilo*, starting from a couple of Jewish feasts, such as Passover and the Pentecost. This approach today seems anachronistic. It would be natural at the time of Adolf von Harnack, when people believed that Christianity appeared as a new religion with a theology and liturgy of its own. In fact, however, we now know that Christianity first appeared as a “Jewish messianic sect”¹⁰ with a Jewish theology and liturgy, including the calendar. Therefore, it is not only unlikely, but absolutely impossible that Christianity did not inherit the liturgical calendars of its Jewish matrix; the latter being not a single community, but a rather wide range of different communities.¹¹

The “apologetic hypothesis” is, then, basically right, but it must be expanded to include the Jewish, pre-Christian traditions.

Asian connections and the feast of Transfiguration of Christ on August 6

The 2 Enoch calendar goes back to the Persian period and to Babylonian astronomy, and so it is legitimate to look for its remnants outside of Egypt,

⁷ H. Förster, *Die Feier der Geburt Christi in der Alten Kirche* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁸ See R. Coquin, “Les origines de l’Épiphanie en Égypte,” in *Noël – Épiphanie. Retour du Christ. Semaine liturgique de l’Institut Saint-Serge*, ed. B. Botte – E. Melia et al. (Lex orandi 40; Paris, 1967), pp. 139-170; and G. Winkler, “Die Licht-Erscheinung bei der Taufe Jesu und der Ursprung des Epiphaniestes. Eine Untersuchung griechischer, syrischer, armenischer und lateinischer Quellen,” *Oriens Christianus* 78 (1994), pp. 177-229. Especially interesting is the hypothesis of Thomas J. Talley who concludes that the date of the Nativity, January 6 could be connected to the date of conception on April 6 that has been the date of Easter in some traditions in Asia Minor; T.J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 120. This hypothesis as such is not very convincing because it operates by the singular facts and not by the calendaric schemes. It is nevertheless interesting because it contains an intuition of the importance of the Asia Minor tradition identifying Nisan with April and not March.

⁹ Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*.

¹⁰ C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

¹¹ I am dealing with all of this in more details in Lourié, “The Jewish matrix of Christianity seen through the early Christian liturgical institutions,” in *Proceedings of the 3. Tübinger Tagung zum Christlichen Orient: Christlicher Orient zwischen Judentum und Islam, 14.-16. Januar 2009* (forthcoming).

especially in the Christian traditions of Asia Minor. However, these traditions were largely suppressed in an early epoch, by those of Palestine and Constantinople. In several cases, they survived even within the liturgy of the capital. In other cases they survived in the outlying districts of the patriarchate of Antioch, especially in Georgia.

Here, in Georgia, we have a Christian avatar of the whole festal cycle from 6.IV to 9.IV, but its most important day, the feast of 6.IV, is accepted throughout the Christian world from the time of Justinian the Great (middle of the sixth cent.) as the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ. The earliest homily on the feast of the Transfiguration on August 6, dated to the middle of the sixth century, is available in a Georgian version (from Greek) without its beginning and without the name of the author.¹² It is clear, however, that the author is the head of the local hierarchy (most probably, patriarch), introducing a new feast with this same homily. Because of the use of the Macedonian name of August, *Loios*, the homily is to be located in the patriarchate of Antioch, and so it is most probable that it was delivered by a patriarch of Antioch. Now I would like to modify the analysis of the editor of the homily, Michel van Esbroeck, that the homily does not “invent” a new feast but rather explains the meaning of an already existing feast that is now introduced in a larger scale.

As always, in its early homiletics, known also in Armenian¹³ and, since the seventh century, in Greek¹⁴, the feast of the Transfiguration is presented as the feast of Tabernacles, in accordance with the Jewish background of the Gospel account.¹⁵ Perhaps this fact presupposes some link with the autumnal part of

¹² M. van Esbroeck, “Une homélie archaïque sur la Transfiguration,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 49 (1980), pp. 418-425.

¹³ Eghishe, ca 400-480. See L. Leloir, “L’homélie d’Eliše sur la montagne du Thabor,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 20 (1986-1987), pp. 175-207. Cf., for the Armenian liturgical context, A. Renoux, “La fête de la Transfiguration,” in *Mens concordet voci: pour Mgr A. G. Martimort à l’occasion de ses quarante années d’enseignement et des vingt ans de la Constitution «Sacrosanctum Concilium»* (Paris: Desclée, 1983), pp. 652-662.

¹⁴ The homily of Anastasius of Sinai, ed. by A. Le Guillou; A. Le Guillou, “Le monastère de la Théotokos au Sinai,” *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 67 (1955), pp. 237-257.

¹⁵ I follow H. Riesenfeld, *Jésus Transfiguré. L’arrière-plan du récit évangélique de la Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur* (Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis 16; København: E. Munksgaard, 1947), but see the modern discussion in J.A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 9; Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1986), pp. 68-69, 73-74; F. Refoulé, “Jésus, nouveau Moïse, ou Pierre, nouveau Grand Prêtre? (Mt 17, 1-9; Mc 9, 2-10),” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 24 (1993), pp. 145-162; and B.E. Reid, *The Transfiguration. A Source- and Redaction-Critical Study* (Cahiers de la Revue biblique 32; Paris: Gabalda, 1993), p. 23. However, all evidence of the early homiletics opts for Riesenfeld, whose opponents ignore the Georgian and Armenian earlier testimonies. Cf. also M. Aubieau, “Une homélie grecque inédite sur la Transfiguration,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 85 (1967), pp. 401-427 – an important early text with a no less important study. For the whole Greek homiletic tradition, see especially M. Sachot, *Les homélies grecques sur la Transfiguration: tradition*

the year, but probably not. The Christian avatars of the feast of Tabernacles were not limited to the autumnal dates due to the strong, and even pre-Christian, tradition of considering this feast as that of the resurrection.

In the Georgian rite itself, we can find some additional festivals unknown elsewhere: the feast of Melchizedek on August 8 and the feast of Aaron on August 9, apart from other memorial days of the same personages in the Georgian rite.¹⁶ The pair of Melchizedek and Aaron is the symbol of the New Testament and Old Testament priesthoods, respectively. The parallel with the feast of the consecration of Methusalam that starts, in 2 Enoch, at the evening of 8.IV and ends before the evening of 9.IV, is obvious.

It is especially important that we have, in the Georgian rite, the whole structure of the cycle from the sixth to the ninth day of a given month. The problem arises, however, that this cycle is attested in August, while the fourth month of the calendar of 2 Enoch would roughly correspond to July. This situation corresponds to the known one-month shifts between the calendars of the Seleucid Empire, where the first month (Babylonian Nisanu) has been identified, at first, with the Macedonian Artemisios (May), but then, at some particular point and place, with the Macedonian Xanthicus (April). These shifts were performed in an uneven manner throughout the Seleucid Empire and its commonwealth, including the kingdoms of the Caucasus.¹⁷

It is not very probable that a cycle presupposing the equation Nisan = Artemisios, instead of Xanthicus, would survive in Antioch where the tradition of equating Nisan with April/Xanthicus had been established in some early epoch, but the situation in the kingdoms of Caucasus could be quite different. If so, the act of accepting the Transfiguration of Christ into the official liturgical calendar of Byzantium as an important Caucasian feast would fit perfectly the Caucasian Church policy of Justinian the Great (527-565 C.E.).

The feasts of Melchizedek and Aaron on August 8 and 9, being the Christian avatars of the 2 Enoch feast of the consecration of Methusalam, were not exported from their Georgian depository. I am sure that we have not exhausted the possibilities for finding the avatars of the luni-solar 2 Enoch calendar in the Christian world. For instance, one should examine the cults of John the Theologian and the martyr Irina in Ephesus.

manuscrite (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1987). There is no room here, however, to reopen the discussion.

¹⁶ J.P. Mahé, "La fête de Melkisédék le huit août en Palestine d'après les «tropologia» et les ménées géorgiennes," *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes* 3 (1987), pp. 83-125.

¹⁷ While Elías Bickerman guessed that the shift of the beginning of the year from Artemisios to Xanthicus took place in the Parthian kingdom between 31 and 17 B.C.E., the situation as a whole has been unclear; for instance, already in the Elephantine papyri, Siwan is roughly June, which corresponds to the beginning of the year in April (Xanthicus), not May. See the authorized and enlarged Russian translation of Bickerman's 1969 monograph, Э. Бикерман, *Хронология древнего мира. Ближний восток и античность* [*Chronology of the Ancient World*]. Пер. с англ. И.М. Стеблина-Каменского. Отв. ред. М.А. Дандамаев (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), p. 22.