

## STEPHEN THE PROTO-MARTYR IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The article contrasts two approaches taken from the homiletics on Stephen, interpreting Acts 6-7: in part I following the Chrysostomian interpretation, as available in the Homilies on Acts, in part II the approach from a pseudo-Chrysostomian writer. In part one the focus on the interpretation is revealed to be on Stephen as an exemplary Christian who is not dominated by the passions, showing his virtue in all circumstances, this in stead of a presumable interpretation about martyrdom or other theological issues, e.g. the position of the Holy Spirit. In part II the pseudo-Chrysostom develops the passage of Acts 6-7 in the sense of anti-Judaic statement, leaving the topic of martyrdom unexplained as well.

**Keywords:** Acts of the Apostles, anti-Judaism, Homilies on Stephen, John Chrysostom on Acts, ministry, pseudo-Chrysostom.

### I.

Our contribution arises from a combination of two interests: early Christian Greek ‘biographical’ homiletics in general and the homiletics on Stephen, the ‘first’ martyr, in particular. Some research on this subject has been published in a volume on Greek homilies on Christian Martyrs, taking up for our part a homilist of little renown, Asterius of Amaseia, of whom we presented a homily on Stephen.<sup>2</sup> Other homilies on the proto-martyr are well known, to list only the Greek ones belonging to the Patristic era: homilies of Gregory of Nyssa, Proclus of Constantinople, Hesychius of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> However, turning to John Chrysostom,

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. LEEMANS / W. MAYER / P. ALLEN / B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, ‘*Let us die that we may live*’. *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria (c. AD 350-AD 450)*, London, 2003, 176-193.

<sup>3</sup> See for the latter, the same volume, pp. 194-204 (=CPG 6573). For Gregory, cf. GNO X,1-2 (CPG 3186;3187); for Proclus, cf. CPG 5837, formerly a pseudo-Chrysostomian text, now attributed to Proclus, cf. M. AUBINEAU, “Ps-Chrysostome, In Stephanum (PG 63,933-4): Proclus de Constantinople, l’impératrice Pulchérie et saint Etienne”, in A.A.R. BASTIAENSEN / A. HILHORST / C. H. KNEEPKENS (edd.), *Fructus Centesimus: Mélanges offerts à G.J.M. Bartelink*, Steenbrugge, 1989,1-16, an attribution already anticipated by F. J. LEROY, *L’homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople*, Città del Vaticano, 1967; and CPG 5816, known as *Oratio* 17 of Proclus, see the remarks by J.H. BARKHUIZEN, *Proclus. Bishop of Constantinople*, Sydney, 2001, 10; id., “Proclus of Constantinople: a Popular Preacher in Fifth-Century Constantinople”, in M.B.