

Book Review

Alois Grillmeier -Theresia Hainthaler, **Christ in Christian Tradition**, vol.2/3, Oxford, 2013, pp. xxv+6709 (tr. by Marianne Ehrhardt)

Prof. A. Grillmeier conceived of a series of books entitled, “Christ in Christian Tradition”. The first version appeared in 1965 in English on request of Prof. Leslie Cross, Oxford, as an enlargement of the first chapter in “Das Konzil von Chalkedon” volume I. When the second edition of “Christ in Christian Tradition” was published in 1975, it was already numbered volume I, indicating that Grillmeier planned other volumes. It was a real research programme to make this study of Christology, from the New Testament up to 800, with an increasing emphasis on the specific Christological idea of the respective local churches and in an ecumenical interest. Vol. I was a history of Patristic Christology. Grillmeier divided the whole work into three vols. But vol. II appeared to be a massive task. It was to be a journey into hitherto largely uncharted territory. So vol. II was eventually divided into 5 parts.

There appeared already in English vol. 2/1 (1987), vol.2/2 (1995), and vol.2/4(1996). The direction of the project was passed already in 1994 from Grillmeier to his collaborator for many years, Prof. Dr. Theresia Hainthaler. Prof. Cardinal Alois Grillmeier died in 1998. Vol. 2/3 appeared in German under the sole editorship of Prof. Dr. Theresia Hainthaler in 2002. The present work is the English version of the German edition. Vol.2/5 is under preparation and is yet to be published in German and English. It deals with the Persian and Caucasian (Armenian, Georgian and Albanian) Churches. All these volumes deal with Post – Chalcedonian Christology. Vol.2/2 deals with the Christology in Constantinople, and vol.2/4 with the Christology in Alexandria, Nubia and Ethiopia.

Vol.2/3 (the present volume) concerns the geographical area of Jerusalem and Antioch. It is a collaborative work with contributions from Cardinal A. Grillmeier himself, T. Hainthaler, Tanios Bou Mansour and Luise Abramowski. It deals with the Christological development in Palestine and in the Patriarchate of Antioch. It concerns itself with the important persons who shaped the Christological thought in these areas during the post – Chalcedonian period. It has to be taken together with the already published previous parts of volume 2. Some of the important theologians who shaped the history in these regions and influenced the faithful during this period are dealt with in the previous volumes.

It is a Christological compendium of the period. The important writers in the Palestinian region and Antiochene region are selected and their Christology is analysed. It was a very difficult task to analyse the writings of individual authors and evaluate their Christological contributions. It is at the same time a history of Christology also. Palestine includes the three Roman provinces (Palestina I, II and III), Gaza, Sinai and part of Arabia. Antioch includes almost all the territories under the Patriarchate of Antioch after the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

This volume attempts to view how the leading figures of the Eastern Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch conceived of the figure of Christ during the post Chalcedonian period and how it influenced the life of the faithful there. It helps us to understand the ancient forms of Christianity in this region during this period and for the recovery of the wholeness of the Church in Christological matters. A lot

of Christological materials are presupposed in this volume. Only a student of Patristic history and Christology can follow easily the development of the thought. That is to say, an acquaintance with all the volumes in this series is necessary for a proper and adequate understanding of the matter discussed here.

The book is divided into two parts:

1. Christology in Palestine after Chalcedon until the Rise of Islam. It has four chapters.
2. Christology in the Patriarchate of Antioch after 451 to the end of the 6th century. It has three Sections and 14 chapters. Section one has 7 chapters, section two has 4 chapters dealing with Greek theology and section three has 3 chapters dealing with Syriac theology. Since Antioch was bilingual, there were Greek writers and Syriac writers in the region.

After Chalcedon (451) the Church was divided into Chalcedonian and non Chalcedonian. Eventually there were attempts to reunite both the parties and new formulations and propositions were introduced by the Emperors and theologians. As a result there emerged a neo-Chalcedonian Christology in the East and we find the echo of it in the writings of some of the leaders of the region. By the end of the 6th century, one can notice convergence in the formulations of the writers in both the camps in the direction of neo-Chalcedonism.

During the period under discussion (451-637), Jerusalem was a monastic and liturgical centre and its influence in Christology is discussed in the first section of this book. In Palestine there were Chalcedonians and non -Chalcedonians and the conflict is apparent among them. The Monks in Palestine had a decisive role in this conflict. The monks and their leaders controlled the faithful. The biographers of the monastic leaders present their heroes as Chalcedonians.

Immediately after 451, Palestine was a stronghold of resistance against the definition of Chalcedon with Theodosius their leader. But when Juvenal could regain his Patriarchate, Jerusalem became clearly Chalcedonian and by the end of the 6th century, Chalcedon was generally accepted in Palestine as a whole. Euthymius and Sabas played a decisive role in shaping the faith of the monks and the people. They influenced also the Arabs in Palestine and Gaza. In Sinai we find Theodore of Raithu, John Moschus and John Climacus, showing signs of neo-Chalcedonism. Procopius of Gaza followed the line of the monastic fathers in Jerusalem. In Gaza in addition to Procopius, we find Abba Isaiah, a certain John and Dorotheos, but not all of them engaged in Christological controversies. Together with the Christological controversy, there was also the Origenist controversy, very strong in Palestine. It was widely spread among the monks.

Part two of this book deals with the Antiochene Patriarchate. The leading figures, important ecclesiastical centres and important schools of thought are extensively discussed. The most important leaders, who contributed to Christology in the Antiochene Patriarchate, were Diodore, Theodore, Nestorius and Theodoret. During the post - Chalcedonian period, we find both Chalcedonians and anti -Chalcedonians in the Patriarchate and split of the hierarchy into two based on Chalcedon. The first anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch was Peter, the Fuller. He initiated the fight for the theopaschite addition to the Trisagion. After Peter, the struggle for the Trisagion

becomes a struggle against the doctrine of two natures, under Philoxenus of Mabbug. The leading anti - Chalcedonians were Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, Simeon of Beth Arsam. The book deals with the Schools of Antioch, Edessa and Nisibis in summary form.

Since Antioch was bilingual , there is a section (section 2) on Greek Theology. Under this title comes the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus, Ephrem of Antioch, Anastasius, and controversy among the Severians. Ephrem stood for Chalcedon, and in fact he was a neo - Chalcedonian. He made use of the “mia physis” formula, the expressions “Christus synthetos”, “hypostatic union” and “one of the Trinity”- all neo-Chalcedonian expressions. Anastasius accepted the doctrine of two natures. He made a distinction between physis and hypostasis. He explained the union as synthetos as that of body and soul. It is, according to him, a mixture and synapheia.

Severus’ views were explained already in the previous volume (2/2). During this period there were several controversies among the Severians. The conflicts are dealt with in ch.4 of this section. Severus of Antioch wrote in Greek. His influence embraced all the Eastern Patriarchates. He puts his mark on the anti-Chalcedonian dogmas more than any other. Among the anti-Chalcedonian Patriarchs of Antioch, Severus alone stands out as a Theologian. He was the only theologian of the group. For the anti-Chalcedonians, Severus is the authority. The authority of Severus’ theology is seen in the Tritheist dispute.

The importance of Philosophy during this period is to be recognised. The Corpus Dionysiacum presents a new Platonic image of Christ. This Corpus became authoritative across all denominational boundaries. In the beginning, Hypatius of Ephesus challenged it. But it spread rapidly. Philosophy, in fact, intruded especially the anti-Chalcedonian camp and it is partly responsible for their fragmentation, especially in the second half of the sixth century .It is partly responsible for Tritheism and the controversy about Probus and John Barbur. The study of Philosophy among the Syrians was promoted by John Philoponus and Sergius of Resaina.

Section 3 deals with Syriac Christology of Jacob of Sarug and Philoxenus of Mabbug. They are normally included among the anti-Chalcedonians. Jacob’s Christology was shaped by the Alexandrian formulations. Both of them wrote in Syriac. Although he was Antiochene, he was Alexandrian and Cyrillian in his formulations. But in reality he was more a poet and not a controversialist. He could be considered a mid way between the two factions.

Philoxenus on the contrary, was in fact a fighter and champion of mia-physite Christology. He represents a step towards the meeting with Hellenistic culture. Although he wrote in Syriac, his theology is more detached from the Syriac tradition. His Christology is basically Cyrillian. The Alexandrian Christology, shaped by Cyrial, is further developed by Philoxenus. The theological fight between Philoxenus and Habib is well known. Both of them studied at the school of Edessa, but they turned to two directions. Both Jacob of Sarug and Philoxenus are very extensively treated, analysing their writings (pp.430-620). Habib is discussed in connection with the controversy with Philoxenus.

During this period there was the Tritheist controversy among the adherents of non- Chalcedonism. There were also several groups and controversies in the non-Chalcedonian camp, such as

aphtarto-docetism of Julian of Halicarnassus, Agnoetes, controversy among the non-Chalcedonian Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria, and controversy about Probus and John Barbur among the monks. There were attempts to patch up the enmity in the anti-Chalcedonian camp. The leadership of Jacob Burdana managed to reconcile the various factions to some extent. The attempts to reunite the quarrelling factions of Christendom failed due to the fanatic monks, who had very influence among the ordinary people in the Syrian villages.

It was a period of conflicts among the followers of Christ in the name of terminology. Each quarrelling faction considered its formulation to be orthodox and the formulation of the other group as heretical. The net result was the loss of faith. The antagonism to the Byzantine Emperors added fuel to the antagonism to Chalcedon. The leaders of the anti-Chalcedonian faction tried to alienate the mass to an anti-imperial camp and the result was the subjection to Islam from South.

This book gives an extensive study of this period and Prof. Hainthaler deserves our respect in collaborating great authorities as contributors to this book. To all the students of Patristic theology it is a must. It has the same theological value as the other parts of volume 2. We now wait for the next part namely volume 2/5, which deals with Persia and the Caucasus.

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