

Tryggve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1-11 in the genuine hymns of Ephrem the Syrian*, with particular reference to the influence of Jewish exegetical tradition (= *Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series* 11). Lund (CWK Gleerup) 1978. 251 S., brosch., SKr. 110.-.

Kronholm's intention is two-fold: first, to establish what interpretation of the pre-Abrahamic material in Genesis is offered in the hymns established by Beck as genuine, and second, to make a comparative study with Jewish exegesis. He concludes that Ephrem is influenced by the Antiochene tradition of *theoria*, by his own ascetical interests, and by haggadic traditions similar to those found in the *Pirke d-Rabbi Eliezer* and Targum Ps.-Jonathan.

The great value of this book is its detailed exposition of the texts of Ephrem. It is hard, however, to avoid the impression that all this wealth of material is only prolegomena to the real study of Ephrem, for almost no evaluation, whether historical or theological, is offered, with the result that while we do indeed learn what Ephrem said, we are given little help to locate him within the spectrum of his contemporaries (Christian and Jewish) or along the lines of development of the exegetical traditions within which he stands. Arguably, limits had to be set to this work somewhere: but to isolate the hymns and the Commentary on Genesis from the rest of Ephrem's writings is surely to concentrate on too narrow a body of texts; and to adduce (sometimes, though not invariably, quoted *in extenso*) parallels from undated rabbinic texts and Targums, and from undatable Mandaean texts (cf. esp. p. 141 n. 18) is not illuminating.

Where an evaluation of relationships between Ephrem and such parallel texts is offered by Kronholm, it is often questionable. For example, to speak of the 'intimate relationship between Johannine conceptions and Mandaic ideas', with reference to Odeberg and Bultmann (p. 138 n. 10), is a massive *petitio principii*. There are undoubtedly conceptual links, but in the aftermath of the discoveries of Qumran and Carsten Colpe's *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (1961), the precise genetical relationships between Mandaism and the fourth gospel postulated by Bultmann are untenable. Similarly, the idea that Ephrem is refuting a Philonic idea (p. 46 n. 4), or that Philo is the ultimate source of one of Ephrem's ideas (p. 48 n. 8), cannot be accepted without further qualifications: Philo, like Ephrem, is dependent on prior exegetical traditions, and the assertion that Ephrem is conceptually related to the expression of an idea in *Philo*, rather than (more generally) to the tradition standing behind the Philonic text, requires demonstration. Ephrem knew no Greek: how then did he combat Philo?

A third example of this tendency of Kronholm to take short-cuts in his interpretation of Ephrem is his use of the Revelation of John as a parallel text (cf. esp. pp. 73, 170; cf. also pp. 115 n. 76, 149, 161). There are undeniable parallels, but if Kronholm wishes to argue that Revelation was Ephrem's *source* he must explain how Ephrem came to know this book, which was not in the canon of the Syriac church. It would be more accurate to say that both Ephrem and Revelation stand within a tradition, ultimately traceable to intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic and wisdom literature, which made use of particular images and themes from the Old Testament. In the case of Rev 11:3, adduced as a significant parallel to Ephrem (cf. p. 158, esp. n. 15), Kronholm has made several questionable assumptions: first, that this passage and the patristic interpretation of it in some western authors were known to the Syriac tradition, and second, that its concept of two eschatological witnesses is significantly related to the concept of two paraenetic witnesses for Adam and Eve in Ephrem, *De Ecclesia* 49.

Much remains to be done in exploring the synchronic and diachronic relations of Ephrem's exegesis. This further work will undoubtedly rest on the solid basis of careful investigations like Kronholm's. And, since Ephrem is datable, this further work will shed important light on the study of the Jewish material. We may hope that Kronholm, who knows both these fields of research so well, will have more to say on the question of their inter-relationships.

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