

“This volume is offered in order to facilitate the dialogue between the thought of Yannaras, which is expressed locally yet is relevant globally, and Western Christian thinkers. This is precisely the role that secondary literature tries to fulfil, analysing connections, facilitating discussions, and ultimately identifying areas that need to be developed further. In this case, the hope is to bring the distinct voice of Greek theology and the challenges it poses to the forefront of modern Christian theology”.

Marius Dumitru HANGANU, Ph.D.

Lois FARAG, *Athanasius of Alexandria. An Introduction to his Writings and Theology*, Cascade Companion, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020, 188 pp.

Lois Farag is a member of the North American Patristics Society, American Academy of Religion, Society of Biblical Literature, The Models of Piety in Late Antiquity Research Group. Since 2005 she is assistant professor of Early Church History at Luther Seminary. Previously she served as adjunct faculty at Ecumenical Institute of Theology, St. Mary’s Seminary and University, Baltimore, Md., Trinity College, Washington, D.C., and full time faculty at Loyola University Maryland, Baltimore, Md.

The work of the theologian Lois Farag on the work and theology of St. Athanasius, is composed of 188 pages, has 444 footnotes, and the bibliography of the book is small in quantity, being restricted only to the work of St. Athanasius and the most important works published in English about his theological contribution. From this point of view I can note a narrow approach of the author, not considering the significant contribution of Russian, Greek and Romanian theology, regarding the theology of St. Athanasius of Alexandria. However, given that the purpose of the paper is to acquaint the reader with the work of St. Athanasius and the historical context of his theology, this omission is justified.

The paper is structured in six chapters, at the end of which are placed two appendices. Also at the end of each chapter is attached a list of *Suggested Readings*, which will offer those who want a systematic deepening of the theology of St. Athanasius, directions to follow.

The first chapter, entitled *Athanasius of Alexandria*, aims to present the historical context in which St. Athanasius theologized. Lois Farag points out that most of St. Athanasius' writings were written in the context of his life, in response to the heresies of the time and the accusations brought against him. This first chapter is more of a monograph of the life of St. Athanasius and presents his travels for ecumenical meetings, meetings with the emperor, correspondence with other bishops and years of exile. The first appendix of this paper is related to this first chapter, because it marks the places that Athanasius visited. The great distance traveled by it in the context of the slow means of transport of that time is highlighted. It also shows the communion and communication between the bishops of that time, as well as the influence of St. Athanasius, whose advice was often sought. The map placed by Lois Farag in the first appendix is also a statistic of the geographical and quantitative dimension of the Arian heresy.

In the second chapter entitled *The Incarnation, Creation and Renewal*, it is presented in the general theological framework of the thought of St. Athanasius, summarized in the expression: *God became man, so that man could become God*. The central theme of the entire work of St. Athanasius is the restoration of the image of God in man through Jesus Christ.

The third chapter, suggestively titled *Scripture*, has the role of exposing the way in which St. Athanasius relates to the Holy Scripture. For him the word of Scripture and its interpretation in the faith of the Church were a *sine qua non* condition of theologizing.

In the fourth chapter, entitled *The Trinity*, Lois Farag engages in the presentation of St. Athanasius' dispute against the Aryans. The Aryan controversy was focused on the status between the Son and His equality with the Father. St. Athanasius affirms the equality of the Son with the Father. He is credited with the first writings on the role and importance of the third Person of the Holy Trinity: the Holy Spirit. The terminology used by St. Athanasius is faithfully represented in the Nicene Creed. Lois Farag also emphasizes that the Creed reflects the special impact and influence that St. Athanasius had on universal theology. The second appendix of the book is a comparative picture of the Nicene and Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

The fifth chapter is entitled *Energieia and Theopoesis* and is aimed at understanding the being of the Holy Trinity. In this chapter, Lois Farag presents the contribution of St. Athanasius on the concept of divine

energy. Although it does not insist at all on the further development of the distinction between being and energy, made in Byzantine theology, but it shows that the origin of the term *theosis* comes from the concept of St. Athanasius *theopoesis* (making Divine).

The sixth chapter, entitled *The Spiritual Life, a Life of Renewal*, sets out the relationship between theology and spirituality in the thinking of St. Athanasius and all the patristic thought of his time. Theology, spirituality, and biblical exegesis could not be separated.

If I were to state the purpose of this book, I could say that it is to highlight the main historical, biblical, theological and spiritual themes of the writings of St. Athanasius, in a synthetic manner, dedicated to modern man for whom they are a stranger. In this sense, the exposition of the thought of St. Athanasius by Lois Farag, although respecting the academic rigor, is open to the simple Christian, the exposition of ideas being a clear and concise one, detached from the abstract academic terminology.

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