Viacheslav V. Lytvynenko, The Doctrine of God and Deification in Athanasius of Alexandria: Relations and Qualities, Praha 2014.

I. General observations

This doctoral thesis searches for the doctrine of God and the concept of deification in the theology of Athanasius of Alexandria. It covers a wide range of Athanasius' writings from all periods of his carreer: Athanasius' apologetic treatises *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione*, polemical writings against the Arians (*Contra Arianos*, *De Decretis*, *De Synodis*), hagiographical *Vita Antonii*, to mention the most frequently cited. It is obvious from the introductory chapters that the major concern of the thesis is the deification of men, though the trinitarian concept of the famous Alexandrian bishop and his arguments on the divine status of the Son are discussed as well, especially in the chapters on the polemical works against the Arians. The research on Athanasius' theology has been prepared with a broad introduction in which the Greek notions on deification are presented from the earliest poetic conceptions, then the platonic tradition (Platon, Philo and Plotinus), biblical passages referring to the deification and the notion of deification in Irenaeus and Origen. The central part of the thesis consists of three main sections (the first concerning Athanasius' apologetic treatises, the second on the writings against the Arians and the third on *Vita Antonii*), where the same pattern in each of these sections is applied – in the first part, there are short introductions to the texts dealt with and sets of quotes are cited from the chosen Athanasius' writings, in the second part, analyses of the quotes and summaries of the results are provided. The aim of the analyses is to reveal Athanasius' concept of deification in different kinds of his theological texts (apologies, polemics, the *vita*) and to emphasize similarity of Athanasius' concept of deification in all these writings. The deification of men in Athanasius is regarded as a restoration of the personal relationship of men with God; this feature is viewed as prevailing over other aspects of Athanasius' doctrine of salvation (juridical, transformational). At the same time, specific word groups are surveyed, expressing deification (θεοποιεῖσθαι), participation (μετοχή, ἴδιος etc.), love (ἀγαπή etc.), delight (χαρά etc.), etc.; it is considered whether and how Athanasius expressed his concept of deification through them.

The thesis covers a great deal of Athanasius' writings, the chosen passages are carefully analyzed and the results are clearly presented. The author is acquainted, in my view, with modern scholarship, he demonstrates the ability to deal with a considerable amount of Greek and Latin sources, and his results seem feasible and based on solid argumentation. The doctoral thesis meets the adequate standards, in my view, and I recommend accepting it.

II. Remark

I have a remark concerning the presentation of the doctrine of God and Athanasius' polemic against the Arians. The real scope of the thesis is not the survey of the Athanasius' trinitarian theology in detail, and it deals with trinitarian views mainly in the context of the polemic against the Arians. The polemic is documented in the anti-Arian writings of two Alexandrian bishops, not only Athanasius, but also his predecessor Alexander. Ariüs' texts are quoted as well and Arius' notion of Christ as a moral example is also searched for.

I find it disappointing that the thesis does not provide a short survey of the course of Athanasius´ life. It would reveal that Athanasius´ life was predominantly a fight for orthodoxy against many different opponents and the polemic with Arius and his contemporary supporters covered the short initiating phase of this struggle. In fact, Athanasius reminds of the Arius´ statements much later than they were the very core of the controversy; the thesis resigns to the quest for the *real* Athanasius´ opponents in his later polemic writings (*De Decretis*, *De Synodis* and others). What is provided is a survey of the rational of Arian heresy from the point of view of the Alexandrian bishops Alexander and Athanasius. The author of the thesis writes that he is "interested both in what Arius *stated*, and how he was *perceived*" (p. 162), however the second standpoint is preferred. It seems that the anti-Arian argumentation of the Alexandrian bishops is accepted too easily and implications from Arius´ statements are drawn beyond what Arius actually wrote.

E.g. on pp. 223-224, it is stated that "Athanasius and Arius relate the Son to the Father … through participation (μετοχή)". In Arius´ part, the claim is supported with three quotes, two of them from *CA* 1.6, where the teaching of *Thalia* is cited, one from *CA* 1.9, where the summary of the Arian views is listed; the summary in *CA* 1.9 is similar to Alexander´s summaries which are impossible to regard as literal quotes. I find it too bold to claim that Arius used the notion of participation (μετοχή), if based on such a weak testimony. First, it was rightly mentioned above in the thesis, p. 168, that Athanasius´ extracts from *Thalia* in *CA* I,5-6 are less reliable paraphrases of the Arius´ teaching than the quotes in *De Synodis* 15. Second, Athanasius used the language of participation in his polemic against the Arians, including the chapters not far from the alleged quotes from *Thalia* in *CA*: e.g. *CA* I.9.10, Metzler 118 (καὶ τοῦτον ὀνόματι μόνον σοφίαν καὶ λόγον κεκλῆσθαι, κἀκείνης τῆς σοφίας τοῦτον μέτοχον καὶ δεύτερον γεγενῆσθαι), I.15.4-5, Metzler 125 (εἰ καθ' ὑμᾶς »ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων« ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς καὶ »οὐκ ἦν πρὶν γεννηθῇ«, πάντως που κατὰ μετουσίαν καὶ αὐτὸς υἱὸς καὶ θεὸς καὶ σοφία ἐκλήθη· οὕτω γὰρ καὶ »τὰ ἄλλα πάντα συνέστηκέ« τε καὶ ἁγιαζόμενα δοξάζεται. τίνος τοίνυν ἐστὶ μέτοχος, εἰπεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀνάγκη. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα πάντα τοῦ πνεύματος μετέχει, αὐτὸς δὲ ἄρα καθ' ὑμᾶς τίνος ἂν εἴη μέτοχος; τοῦ πνεύματος; …). The expressions for participation seem to be used in *CA* as a part of Athanasius´ polemic. It does not mean, in my view, that Athanasius accepted the word μετοχή as his own expression, but rather as a polemic term against the teaching of the Arians.

On pp. 164-165, the epistemological gap between the transcendent Father and the Son in Arius is supposed to be documented from the Arius´ own writings. However, the documentation is based on the quote from *Alexander´*s letter, mentioning the Arian statement that the Son is 'one of the things made', without taking into consideration that there is the more careful wording preserved in the Arius´ letter to Alexander: 'perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures'. Beginning with the former expression ('one of the things made'), the anti-Arian argument is developed according to Alexander´s account only. I wonder whether Arius´ letters are really taken into consideration as has been stated, see p. 161: "In my analysis of Arius´ thought I will give priority to his letters…"

Below in the *Conclusion* of the same section, it is stated that in general the "Arius focus on the transcendence of God and his unique qualities leads him to make Christ as *far apart from*

the Father as possible" (p. 183; italics in the quote is mine, P.D.). The statement properly describes Athanasius´ understanding of the Arian heresy. But it is possible, in my view, to express Arius´ notion of God the other way round: in spite of the emphasis on the monas of God the Father, there are several expressions (in the Arius´ letters in particular) documenting Arius´ concern to ensure *closeness* of the Son to the Father; cf. *Urk.* 1[15].4, a series of designations for the Son: πλήρης, θεός, μονογενής, ἀναλλοίωτος· (the quote is cited without the emendation offered by Opitz). Such statements by Arius are rare, but they are testified despite the bitter anti-Arian polemic. It seems to me that the careful reading of Athanasius´ texts and arguments, which leads to the plausible results, in my view, when Athanasius´ own themes (as the deification of men) are discussed, does not reveal Arius´ teaching preserved in the Athanasius´ polemics but rather the Arian heresy as Athanasius (and the Church Fathers after him) understood it.

(For small omissions and mistakes, see the copy of the thesis. As I stated above, the reviewed thesis, in my view, meets the standards of a scientific publication. However, omissions of capital letters in the proper names occur regularly in the Greek quotes from the edition made by H.-G. Opitz (see e.g. notes 760, 876, 886). In the list of used sources, p. 340, *De Synodis* fell out.)

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