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**Review of Gregory Tucker, *The Hymnography of the Middle Byzantine Ecclesiastic Rite & its Festal Theology. Introduction – Edition & Translation – Commentary, Studies in Eastern Christian Liturgies 5*, Aschendorff, Münster 2023, xxvi+661 pp.**

The volume is a revision of the doctoral dissertation defended by Gregory Tucker at the University of Regensburg in 2021. Although doctoral dissertations most often serve as the mere entry to the scientific community, the author conducted groundbreaking research in the field of Byzantine hymnography, of which the importance is difficult to overestimate.

The work begins with acknowledgements, followed by a guide to abbreviations, a discussion of stylistic questions and a guide to biblical references. After that, Chapter 1 provides a general introduction for the study. Its scope, the most important definitions it relies on, its aims and research questions are discussed, just like the source material, the methodology, the research history of the subject, and the structure of the book.

The first major unit of the manual (Part I: Hymns of the Great Church) is opened by Chapter 2, which provides an analysis of the history of Constantinopolitan ecclesiastic hymnography from its earliest beginnings to the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The genres of Byzantine hymnography are also discussed, and serious attention is dedicated to the contexts of hymns within church services, i.e. their respective performances as parts of the liturgy.

Chapter 3 serves as an introductory chapter for the edition of hymns included in the volume. Besides the scope and basis of the edition, the principles of the Greek edition, its apparatus, and the principles of the English translation are also discussed, followed by the descriptions of the manuscripts and inscriptions used for the work. Chapter 4 presents

the comparative editions of the hymns, thematically categorized into the following subchapters: Feasts of the Lord, Theotokos, Proper of the saints, Common of the saints, Church dedications & civic events, Great Fast and Pentecost, closed by Ordinary. The text editions of the hymns conform to the highest philological standards, making the manual a reliable sourcebook for scholars.

The second major unit of the book (Part 2: Towards a Theology of the Festal Hymns of the Great Church) provides an introduction for the commentary in Chapter 5, then proceeding with a select commentary of the hymns of the Great Feasts (Chapter 6). Beginning with Indiction, the author continues with the Nativity of the Theotokos, the Exaltation of the Cross, the Nativity of the Lord, Theophany, Meeting the Lord, Holy & Great Week, Assumption of the Lord, Sunday of Pentecost, the Council of Chalcedon, and the Transfiguration of the Lord, ending with the Dormition of the Theotokos. This chapter is a particularly valuable part of the work, due to its insightful analyses and large quantity of information.

General conclusions are drawn in Chapter 7. The significance of ecclesiastic hymnography is evaluated, just like the role played by hymns in the history of the Ecclesiastic Rite, and the general characteristics of ecclesiastic hymns are described, closed by a review of potential future directions in the field. Although some of the conclusions could have been elaborated in somewhat greater detail, it does not diminish the overall value of the chapter.

The volume contains five appendices. Appendix A discusses the synaxes and akolouthai with processions and interim stations preserved in the manuscripts *Patmos 266* and *Jerusalem Timiou Staurou 40*, while Appendix B deals with the synaxes and akolouthai for September in the same two manuscripts. Appendix C provides a comparative table of the akolouthai on September 1, while D contains a similar table for the akolouthai on September 14. Finally, Appendix E reconstructs the hypothetical phases of development of ecclesiastic hymnography.

The book also includes a list of manuscripts, a very detailed bibliography, three different indices of hymns (by Incipit, by date and by saint), and is closed by a general index. The volume is also an example of excellent typographical work, with very few typos and errors. Despite its considerable length and complexity, the work is easy to use, both as a sourcebook for editions and as a commentary. It will serve as an important manual for scholars of the field for the foreseeable time.

*Zoltán Szegvári*



