
The pages of the two volumes of this work are numbered consecutively, with Part I running from page 9 to page 366, and Part II carrying on from page 367 to page 698. Part I begins with an extensive introduction (pp. 9–119). It discusses the life of Ephrem, his literary legacy, the nature of the Commentary on the Diatessaron, its authenticity, its time of origin, its character as a compilation by one of Ephrem’s students, its theological teaching, the Vorlage of the text used in the commentary, its style, its exegetical approach, the pronouncements made in the commentary on the opponents of the compiler, and, finally, some notes on the translation of the Syriac text itself. Pages 120–630 contain the actual translation of the commentary, and it is accompanied by 1,517 explanatory and or cross-referencing footnotes (the introduction has 514 separately numbered footnotes). The notes fill (in my estimation) a total of about one-third of the pages of the translation, so that it can be described as extensive and detailed. The second part is concluded with an extensive list of addenda (pp. 630–691): three lists of abbreviations, a bibliography of 27 pages, a scripture index, a name list (ancient and modern), and a very useful subject index. One of the major strengths of this work is the references provided in the footnotes to the commentary to relevant passages in the genuine works of Ephrem. It would therefore have been valuable to have had an index of these references as well.

The introduction serves as proof of the commendable scientific approach the author has applied to his subject matter, whether it be the current state of knowledge about Ephrem’s life and work, the nature of early Syriac Christianity, the characteristics of Ephrem’s theology as it is presented in his genuine works, or the development of the commentary from possible notes by Ephrem through various additions into the preserved Syriac and Armenian versions. An impressive array of material has been reviewed and what was needed has been summarized and is reflected in a masterfully concise way. I have come across very few obvious errors (such as the misspelt English word ‘Theologien’ in note 141 of the introduction and the remark on p. 41 that Ephrem was still working in Edessa in the year 377).6

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6) Comparison with Lange’s previous publication, *The Portrayal of Christ in the Syriac Commentary on the Diatessaron* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), p. 32, proves that the date referred to should have been 371.
Lange argues convincingly that the genuine material deriving from Ephrem in the Commentary is much more limited than we would have liked. A compiler from the circle of students of Ephrem put these notes together (which, he says, could have been written by Ephrem or could have consisted of transcripts of his lectures, cf. p. 73), and then added material of his own to produce what can be called an ‘Urtext’ by about 390–400 CE (see p. 75; on p. 80 he broadens this window to 380–400 CE). This ‘Urtext’ was the one which was originally translated into Armenian, but it was later also supplemented by new Armenian material which is lacking in the Syriac text. The Syriac ‘Urtext’ was, in turn, also emended and supplemented by a Syriac-speaking editor to eventually produce (by about 480 CE) the Syriac version which is known from the preserved pages of the Chester Beatty 709 manuscript. The presence of theological terminology which could only stem from the Second Ecumenical Synod of 381 and the description of the Holy Spirit as being of the same (divine) nature as the Father and the Son in the commentary point, according to Lange, to a time of origin of the ‘Urtext’ between 381 and 400 CE (cf. p. 80).

An investigation into the central theological ideas contained in the commentary brings Lange to the conclusion that its teaching about the Trinity and Christology is, to a large extent, congruent with the theology of the genuine Ephrem. It displays the same polemics against Bardaisan, Marcion, and Arius which is also found in the genuine works of Ephrem. But the author of the commentary also goes beyond Ephrem’s views and the time-frame in which he operated, displaying himself ‘astonishingly well-informed’ about the theological discussions in the Greek-speaking West at about 400 CE. The compiler of the commentary also succeeded in integrating this western terminology into the commentary (Lange, p. 105). Its Trinitarian position can, according to Lange, be described as neo-Nicaeanic (‘neunicaenisch,’ p. 105), a point of view which only developed after his death.

The style of the commentary varies widely, supporting the notion that it was not written by a single author who worked consistently and systematic. On some topics there is a detailed discussion in the commentary, while in other places the comments often resemble notes taken down during a lecture. On the other hand, the use of antitheses and the many typological connections made between Old-Testament symbols and their fulfillment in the New Testament, as well as the exegetical approach which recognizes ‘types’ and ‘symbols’ in nature and scripture are constant characteristics of the commentary, and all of these also characterize the genuine work of Ephrem. Similarly, the idea that the Jews rejected the Messiah, and that the Jewish people were consequently