

## PREFACE

The present volume devoted to the Eastern Fathers (Greek, Coptic, Armenian and Syrian) completes the work begun by Johannes Quasten some fifty years ago. It has made use of the skills of a number of scholars. Quasten's third volume, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature*, embraced the period from the Council of Nicaea to that of Chalcedon. But, especially for the years immediately after 400, many authors were left out of it, some of little importance, but others of considerable interest, e.g. Atticus of Constantinople, Firmus of Caesarea and many others who lived at the time of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Here we have tried to round off Quasten's work so that the present volume may be a real work of reference. Furthermore, in the chapters on Syriac (Bettiola) and Coptic (Orlandi), authors and subjects already dealt with in the previous volumes have been treated afresh, both to give greater homogeneity and completeness to the chapters and because of the progress made by studies in those fields.

The chapters on Coptic, Syrian and Armenian writers have greater unity, each one having been written by a single specialist. It was impossible, though, for a single person to deal with all the Greek-speaking authors; here we had to make use of several collaborators, each of whom has his or her own method and approach. As far as possible, a degree of uniformity has been sought. But how were the various contributions to be arranged? Three solutions were possible: a) a single chapter with the authors arranged in alphabetical order; b) the system adopted by the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*; c) a chronological arrangement, as far as possible, by geographical areas. Each of these solutions had advantages and difficulties. After listening to various suggestions, the third solution was chosen. But it too presented incongruities, both in the placing of some authors (in which area should Dionysius the Areopagite be put?) and in the chronological order, which is sometimes uncertain. In any case the intention was to provide a working instrument useful to the reader.

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