Timothy Ailuros Encyclopedia Article

Timothy Ailuros

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Contents

Timothy Ailuros Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Timothy Ailuros.....3

Timothy Ailuros

TIMOTHY AILUROS (d. 477), known as Timothy II, fifth-century Monophysite theologian who became the first patriarch of the Coptic Church in Alexandria (457–460; 475–477). He was surnamed by his opponents Ailuros ("the cat") because of his small stature and his weasel words and ways. Venerated as a saint by the Coptic Church, Timothy, along with other monophysite patriarchs, was anathematized by the church of Rome under Pope Hormisdas (514–523).

Little is known of Timothy's early life. It is certain that during the Christological controversies of the fifth century he sided with those who rejected the decree of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which defined Christ as "one hypostasis in two natures." The council appointed the orthodox Proterios as patriarch of Alexandria. But the local mob lynched Proterios, and in 457 the Egyptian bishops elected Timothy to succeed him. He served as patriarch for three years, until 460, when he was removed from the patriarchal position and banished. While in exile, Timothy carried on a correspondence against the Chalcedonian decisions and wrote several essays promoting Monophysitism.

Timothy's fate changed again when, upon the death of Emperor Leo I, Basiliskos usurped the throne and turned to the monophysites for support. He reinstated Timothy, who became instrumental in the writing of an encyclical that Basiliskos issued in an attempt to impose Monophysitism as the official Christology of the church. Timothy ruled the church of Alexandria for two more years, until his death in 477. His ecclesiastical policy was characterized both by ambiguity and by fanaticism.

Of Timothy's writings against the Council of Chalcedon three letters have survived in a Syriac translation. A sermon and fragments of his essays have been incorrectly attributed to Timothy III of Alexandria.

Bibliography

Original writings are available in *Patrologia Graeca*, edited by J.-P. Migne, vol. 86, pt. 1, (Paris, 1860). Useful discussions can be found in Evagrios Scholastikos's Greek-language *Historia ecclesiastica* (2.8–2.11), available as *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius*, edited by Joseph Bidez and Léon Parmentier (Amsterdam, 1964), pp. 55–63. See also Konstantinos I. Amantos's *Historia tou Buzantinou kratous*, 2d ed., vol. 1 (Athens, 1953), p. 129.