

disagree with his suggested explanation of lines 109–111); the conflicting interpretations (referred to in the editor's Preface) of the allegory of the procession in the Earthly Paradise given by P Dronke and K Foster, where the former (whose reading appears here in the revised form already published in *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 53–54, 1978–79) follows a line akin to that of C G Hardie (viz. that it is some kind of allegory of Dante's personal experience), the latter the traditional explanation (except for the symbolism of the Tree, for which Foster offers original, if not completely persuasive suggestions); Cremona's interesting comments on Adam's 'reordering' of Dante's unspoken questions in *Paradiso* XXVI ('a rebuke to the expres-

sion of Dante's eager but uncritical curiosity, similar to . . . the curiosity that led him to peer too closely at the figure of St John'); and finally, P Shaw's suggestion that the rose of the blessed in *Paradiso* XXX may derive from the symbol of the *Roman de la Rose*, but as an intentional conscious contrast, so 'making amends for the aberrations of his youthful self' (i.e. for the composition of *Il fiore*: though it should be added that in 'his' version of the *Rose* Dante plays down the celebration of sensual love).

All the contributions are of a consistently high standard. This is a volume of *Haute vulgarisation* in the best sense of the term.

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Marius Victorinus, THEOLOGICAL TREATISES ON THE TRINITY, trans. by Mary T Clark R.S.C.J.

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH: A NEW TRANSLATION, Volume 69, *The Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C. \$24.95.*

It is widely held that the Latin fathers were less profound theologians than those who wrote in Greek. "Neither the Latin language", wrote Prestige, "nor the ordinary Latin intellect, was capable of the subtlety of the conception which approved itself to the Greek theologians". How far this view has become axiomatic can be seen in a recent assessment of Leo the Great. "Doctrinally Leo was clear and forcible", we read in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "but not profound. He knew no Greek". Marius Victorinus did know Greek, and had read widely in Greek philosophy. But this has not saved him from neglect. Although he took a lively interest in contemporary theological developments in the East, his own contributions to the debate seem to have had no impact on the course of the discussion. Jerome, writing not long after Marius had died, describes his theological works as "extremely obscure; understood only by the erudite". Prestige does not mention him in *God in Patristic Thought*, and he merits one allusion, in a footnote, in Grillmeier's *Christ in Christian Tradition*.

No less than three editions of the theological works of Marius Victorinus have appeared in the last three decades. There have been several important monographs. There are many grounds for welcoming this awakening of interest. Marius' conversion to Christianity is a significant episode in the history of late Roman antiquity. As professor of rhetoric at Rome he was a well-known public figure, and his philosophical learning was highly prized amongst the non-Christian, upper-class intelligentsia. Not surprisingly, his conversion, late in life, caused a sensation. His writings shed some light on the motivation of that conversion. He found in the Christian scriptures a teaching which he thought had much in common with his own philosophical tradition, and upon his conversion he put that tradition to work in the defence of the Nicene doctrine against the Arians. This itself is interesting. For it has sometimes been held that the Arian heresy arose from an exaggerated respect for and dependence on Greek philosophy: Arianism has even been described as a watering down of Christian doctrine to make it more accept-

able to potential converts. Yet here we have a pagan, well versed in Greek philosophy, who on becoming a Christian springs immediately to the defence of the Nicene doctrine, championing it against the Arians precisely on the grounds of Greek philosophy. Then there is the peculiar quality of Marius' theological argument, so different in method and content from contemporary Greek theology, and of a subtlety to perplex the sharpest Greek mind. But perhaps his greatest claim on our attention is the fact that he was the first theologian, in East or West, to thoroughly integrate the Holy Spirit in his doctrine of God. Moreover, he had done this from the outset. For him, the question of the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit with Father and Son did not arise as a consideration subsequent to the question of the consubstantiality of Father and Son, as it was to do in the East, and at a slightly later date. The consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit had been an integral part of Marius' theological scheme from the beginning. If further justification is sought for taking this author seriously, we might mention the light he can shed as an acute, independent observer of contemporary developments in trinitarian discussion in the East, and his twofold influence on Augustine: as the translator of those books of the Platonists which had so crucially influenced Augustine's intellectual and spiritual development, and as the source of some elements in Augustine's own trinitarian reflection.

In view of all this, it is a very great pity that the book under review, the first translation of Marius Victorinus into English, cannot be recommended. The translation is of very uneven quality, and too often wrong. Words, phrases and sometimes sentences are omitted without explanation. Meanings are mistaken, moods and voices misconstrued and at times the syntax of whole sentences is misunderstood. I offer one example, chosen for its simplicity. The translator has Marius say, in commentary on Philippians 2:6 "First of all the

Photinians and those after Photinus and before him who say that Jesus is mere man and also made from man recognise the blasphemy as impious" (p 121). This can only mean that Marius is accusing the Photinians of wilfully persisting in what they know to be impious blasphemy. Marius makes no such accusation. The word translated by "recognise" is *cognoscant*, in the subjunctive mood. Marius is saying that, in the light of the evidence, the Photinians *ought* to acknowledge that their opinion is impious blasphemy.

The waywardness of the translation is all the more surprising in view of the close, indeed, often slavish dependence on Pierre Hadot's French translation for the Sources Chrétiennes edition. One cannot complain of the mere fact of this dependence. The difficulty of the Latin text is notorious. Marius' style is very concise and highly elliptical, so that one has to make a considerable effort to understand his meaning. In the nature of the case, one's translation is bound to be more than usually interpretative; Hadot provides such a translation, and, despite its occasional eccentricities, it deserves the more respect in view of his deep acquaintance with Marius' philosophical milieu. Any translator of Marius who failed to take serious note of Hadot's work would be adding unnecessarily to difficulties which are already considerable. But the present translator sometimes follows Hadot when a closer look at the Latin, or the requirements of English ought not to allow this, and sometimes diverges from him unnecessarily, inexplicably and quite unintelligibly.

The lengthy introduction is marred by the same carelessness as the translation. It is implied, for example, that the Council of Nicaea met under the leadership of Athanasius (p 11). Little will be found here to disabuse the reader of the impression he will form from the translation, that Jerome's estimate of Marius' work was over-generous to a degree.

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