

Vinzent's works will know, he does in no way refrain from offering his own, some might say unique, interpretation of Tertullian's text.

Vinzent is correct in asserting that Tertullian's introductions to his texts are the 'glasses Tertullian puts on the noses of his readers', at which we should not stop (p. 352). Indeed, these texts often tell us more about the intellectual biography and theological agenda of the author than the actual body of the volume. Of course, when reading this commentary, the readers have to aware that they are looking through the glasses that Vinzent puts on their noses – at which they should not stop. For instance: 'Because of Marcion's key role in the making of Scripture, the main topic of *On the prescription of heretics* is Scripture itself, not only the right or wrong use or interpretation of it' (p. 34). Whenever Vinzent speaks of 'Marcion's key role in the making of Scripture', he is referring to his hypothesis that Marcion produced the first Gospel ever written and that all four of our canonical Gospels used Marcion's Gospel as a source. Accordingly, he can conclude that 'Whenever we read Tertullian we should check whether the opposite of what he is trying to convey could be closer to reality. For our context, for example, his statement that his own *Gospel*-text is the one, true and traditional *Gospel* of the Apostles which was cut up and down by Marcion, while the historical truth might have been the contrary' (p. 352). As one can easily imagine, this particular view on the development of the Early Church largely shapes Vinzent's present commentary. For those readers who cannot follow Vinzent regarding said hypothesis it may not always be easy to follow his comments on Tertullian's work, either. Still, Vinzent's book is a powerful reminder that the introduction is more often than not a crucial part of an author's work and should not be neglected – a lesson that this reviewer desperately keeps trying to teach his students.

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Anaxagoras, Origen, and Neoplatonism. The legacy of Anaxagoras to classical and late antiquity. Vol I and II. By Panayiotis Tzamalikos. (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 128/I and 128/II.) Pp. xix + 823; ix + 824 + 1793. Berlin–Boston: de Gruyter, 2016. €219. 978 3 11 041946 7; 1861 5996
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To many of us, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae is a tenebrous figure, imprecisely described as a Presocratic, who owes his notoriety to the dubious tradition that he was expelled from Athens for teaching that the sun is a lump of incandescent rock. To Aristotle and Plato he had the merit of being the first cosmologist to recognise the necessity of positing mind as a first cause, though he failed, as both complain, to give an account of the subsequent workings of this mind in the natural order and implies that all things were created at once without being organised for any good or rational end. In Aristotle's view, he lacks not only a teleological understanding of causation but a coherent theory of substance, as, instead of reducing every physical body to a unique ensemble of elements, he regards every composite stuff as a 'homoiomery' which contains every other stuff, and thus commits

himself to an interminable regress. This testimony, according to Tzamalikos, is an amalgam of misunderstanding and malice, which holds its own in modern scholarship only because Harold Cherniss's sceptical monograph on *Aristotle's criticism of the Presocratics* has gone unread (pp. 63–9). No English-speaking student of Aristotle will read the last claim without surprise, and one cannot but suspect that Cherniss is here a surrogate for Tzamalikos himself, whose profoundly erudite works on Origen have indeed received less notice than they deserve. Tzamalikos also finds an ancient counterpart in Simplicius, the Neoplatonic commentator on Aristotle, who spares his master while tactfully correcting his lampoon on the Clazomenian. Aristotle, he says, expounded only the superficial meaning of his predecessor, who in fact had hinted at a double creation, one noetic and consequently synchronic or rather timeless, and the other unfolding gradually as the *logoi*, or latent principles which eternally inhabit the divine mind are actualised in the temporal sequence that the divine will has ordained from the beginning. Aristotle, who had no use for the concept of a divine will, also fails to see (as Tzamalikos argues on behalf of Simplicius) that the homoiomerics are not the elements by the principles of creation. Once this is grasped, Anaxagoras is acquitted of all the absurdities that have been laid at his door, and is also seen to anticipate the Christian conception of a god who is at once a final and an efficient cause, thus solving a problem that was barely formulated by his ancient detractors or their modern allies.

Tzamalikos hints that Christian thought, in emancipating itself from the pagan tendency to equate providence with necessity, might also have challenged the Platonic dogma that only an incorporeal God can be omnipresent, impassible and eternal (p. 422). It is no surprise that he reconciles Stoic theology with the teaching of Anaxagoras, but hardly to be expected that Anaxagoras would also prove in this study to have been the chief mentor of Origen, the first of whose first principles is the incorporeality of God. There is no doubt that the gubernatorial role of the will of God in Origen's thought sets him so far apart from the Greeks as almost to justify the label 'anti-Platonist'; Tzamalikos, who devised this label, has argued cogently elsewhere that Origen populates the noetic cosmos not with individual souls but with the embryonic *logoi* of future entities. He is thus indebted twice over to Anaxagoras as Tzamalikos depicts him; and, as we are reminded in a long chapter on the decorated body of the Logos, even the incorporeal second person of the Trinity is seldom divested in Origen's theology of the bodily attributes which he acquired as the incarnate and exalted Jesus of Nazareth. I continue to find it perplexing that a scholar who characterises Origen as an anti-Platonist should identify him with the friend of Plotinus who wrote only two books and lived into the reign of Gallienus; Tzamalikos sees, more clearly than other scholars, that this proposal requires us to extend the life of the Christian Origen to the 260s, but that is all the more reason for declining to identify the two namesakes. But of course the chief objection to this thesis is the absence of any knowledgeable allusion to Anaxagoras in Origen's writings, even in the *First Principles* which may owe its title to him (p. 20). Of three references in *Against Celsus*, one repeats his blasphemy on the sun, while the others credit him with 'wise maxims' which Euripides cast into memorable verse. Tzamalikos accepts the association, urging somewhat tendentiously that the

survival of nineteen plays (twelve by mere chance) shows that the ancients prized him more than Aeschylus or Sophocles.

Tzamalikos foresees that he will be charged with superimposing his own conceits upon Simplicius, as the latter has superimposed his own Neoplatonism on his predecessor. Such strictures would be more persuasively answered if the book were more clinical in time and not so prolix in its belligerent sallies against the ignorance of the modern academic world. It is not true, for example, that the Latin edition of Origen's *First principles* both asserts and denies the existence of uncreated beings other than God (p. 931); the passages quoted to show this intimate clearly enough that all particular beings are created. A translator who has not succeeded in mastering one difficult clause of a sentence in Alexander of Aphrodisias is unfairly convicted of an 'utter misrendering' (p. 23). Simplicius may confess to finding some unclarity in Aristotle; he does not stigmatise him as 'uncertain, dubious and indeed inarticulate' (p. 576). For all that, it cannot be denied that Tzamalikos has a grasp of the ancient philosophical *corpus*, including the Aristotelian commentators who make up almost half of it, that is matched by only a handful of living scholars, none of whom could pretend to his equally comprehensive grasp of patristic literature. For this reason alone, his study demands our attention, though it asks us to swallow too much when it credits Origen, or any third-century Christian, with the proclamation of a 'homoousian Trinity' (p. 1562).

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Writing and communication in early Egyptian monasticism. Edited by Malcolm Choat and Maria Chiara Giorda. (Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity, 9.) Pp. xiv + 239 incl. 3 ills and 2 tables. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2017. €114. 978 90 04 25465 7; 2213 0039

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The contemporary writing produced within late Roman ascetic circles was as important as the asceticism itself – perhaps even more so. To write about asceticism was, in any case, an ascetic act – Derek Kreuger has made that much clear. It also changed a haphazard and varied range of Christian experiments in *anachōrēsis*, 'withdrawal', into a movement, a culture, that cast its web with time, albeit thinly, over the whole of the ancient world.

In the case of this book, the boundaries are more narrowly drawn; but the ten papers presented give two vital impressions: first, the way in which the written evidence helped precisely to create and define a single culture, so scattered along the river and so soon to be transplanted, as it were, to Gaza and to Palestine more generally; and second, the sheer number of topics that inquiry opens up – the materiality of communication (papyrus in particular), the continuity of custom and ideology that it sustains, the difference between the portable and the rooted (epistolography and epigraphy), the achieved permanency of 'monasticism' as an ideal with a theology (and an anthropology) of its own, and the relation between what monks wrote and what they read (the Bible especially).