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#### Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v  
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, grec 1853, f. 186v

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crossed, both in the view of pagan authors and in that of ecclesiastic writers. It is fair to say that it is precisely this similarity between the two movements that licenses the hypothesis of their cross-pollination, but it is also fair to say that the A.'s caveats are even more persuasive.

All in all, the reader who has been guided through the primary sources and unbiased evaluation of the various scholarly positions in such a specialized field is (gratefully) ready to share the A.'s balanced conclusion that "Il est toujours très stimulant de voir surgir une hypothèse de travail nouvelle à propos de textes anciens déjà maintes et maintes fois scrutés. L'hypothèse interprétative nous a paru séduisante et sans aucun doute féconde par les questions qu'elle soulève, mais en l'absence de preuves d'ordre littéraire ou archéologique évidentes, elle ne peut qu'avancer des parallèles en abondance, malheureusement jamais tout à fait probants. Fondée sur une analyse stratigraphique du texte de la source Q des Évangiles, la 'Cynic hypothesis' s'appuie sur des arguments liés à la fois au genre littéraire de Q et à son contenu. Autant l'hypothèses d'une connaissance, par les auteurs de Q, de collections de chriés grecques, peut-être cyniques, qui jouèrent un rôle décisif dans la diffusion du cynisme, semble pouvoir être raisonnablement envisagée, autant les parallèles nombreux, censés révéler des similitudes de comportement et d'attitude morale entre la communauté de Q et les philosophes cyniques, ne sont pas convaincants. L'examen de la source Q nous a persuadée que l'usage du parallèle était sans doute abusif de la part des tenants de la 'Cynic hypothesis'. C'est en effet un instrument méthodologiquement délicat à manier, car les similitudes de surface sont loin de recouvrir une intention analogue ou des réalités identiques. Même si les cyniques et les gens de Q ont en commun le souci de renverser les conventions et les hiérarchies, leurs chemins ne vont pas dans le même sens comme l'indiquent les buts respectivement visés: d'un côté, il s'agit de débarrasser l'homme de toutes les contraintes sociales grâce à un entraînement volontaire difficile, de l'autre d'accomplir la volonté d'un Dieu-Père. Parce que l'esprit des dits de Q n'est pas celui du cynisme, il n'est pas légitime de parler d'un Jésus 'Cynic-like teacher' tout comme de vouloir déceler à tout prix un message de teneur cynique dans le texte de Q. En revanche, si l'on veut émettre l'hypothèse que les gens de Q ont été en relation avec des cyniques, il est intéressant de suggérer que les deux groupes ont pu entretenir des rapports de concurrence, comme ce fut d'ailleurs parfois le cas ensuite, dans le christianisme et le monachisme des premiers siècles, car tous deux voulaient délivrer à leurs contemporains un message radical exigeant une mise en pratique immédiate" (p. 219).

This beautiful and instructive book contains a bibliography and an *Index locorum* with special attention to the passages of the "Source Q".

CDA

*Aeneas of Gaza: Theophrastus. With Zacharias of Mytilene: Ammonius*, translated by S. Gerts, J. Dillon & D. Russell, Preface by R. Sorabji, Bloomsbury, London - New Delhi - New York - Sydney (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), pp. xxiii + 181

This volume is comprised of two works devoted to the topics which formed the subject of a prolonged controversy between Christian and Platonic thinkers at the end of Antiquity: the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, and the creation in time versus the eternity of the cosmos. Three authors involved in the controversy are dealt with and a fourth remains in the background. The three belong, all of them, to the so-called School of Gaza: Aeneas of Gaza (end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century), Zacharias of Mytilene (d. after 536 and before 553), and Procopius of Gaza (d. ca. 538); the author who remains in the background, John Philoponus, in reality sets the tone of the entire discussion, as shown by the title of the general introduction by R. Sorabji (pp. vii-xxx), which runs "Waiting for Philoponus". Procopius of Gaza receives some attention, but the focus of the volume is on the works of Aeneas of Gaza and Zacharias of Mytilene. Aeneas' dialogue entitled *Theophrastus* has been translated in part by J. Dillon and in part by D. Russell; Zacharias' dialogue entitled *Ammonius* has been translated by S. Gertz: more details on the authorship of the various parts of the two translations are provided at p. xxxi. The three Gazan writers are presented by R. Sorabji as forerunners of John Philoponus, whose attack against eternalism contained in the well-known *Against Proclus' On the Eternity of the Cosmos*, as well as in two works against Aristotle that are preserved only indirectly, was by far the most important one.

A brief survey of the issue at hand might be useful here. Even though the anti-Christian scope of Proclus' *Eighteen Arguments On the Eternity of the Universe* has been challenged (H.S. Lang - A.D. Macro, *Proclus: On*

*the Eternity of the World [De Aeternitate mundi]*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2001), it remains the case that an entire series of Christian authors writing after Proclus set for themselves the task of refuting the idea that creation in time implies the paradox of a God that, albeit being described as transcendent and unchangeable, takes the “decision” to initiate the world. Clearly interwoven with this theological question is that of the interpretation of the *Timaeus* from Aristotle onwards – one of the most debated questions in post-classical Greek philosophy, and one on which the landmark study is that of the late lamented M. Baltes, *Die Weltentstehung des platonischen Timaios nach den antiken Interpreten*, I-II, Brill, Leiden 1976 and 1978 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 30 and 35). The reaction against Proclus’ eternalism features in Aeneas of Gaza, in Zacharias of Mitylene, and in Procopius of Gaza, as well as in the most famed of the refutations of Proclus’ arguments, that of John Philoponus. It is one of the merits of this volume that it allows the reader to see both the continuity and the differences within this stream of thought.

The central train of the Introduction is that even though Philoponus’ arguments are best understood against the background of the apologetic position of the so-called “School of Gaza”, his stance is significantly different. Philoponus acts as a true Neoplatonic insider, whose objections are raised not in so far as eternalism contrasts with the Christian faith, but in so far as Proclus’ arguments misunderstood both the wording of the *Timaeus* and the doctrine of causality involved in it. Nothing comparable features in Aeneas’ *Theophrastus* and Zacharias’ *Ammonius*: as Sorabji puts it, “The anti-Platonist arguments (...) very occasionally anticipate those found in Philoponus” but “they cannot be compared. One important factor is that Philoponus does repeatedly what the Gazans do only occasionally. He takes on his Platonist opponents on their own terms, using their premises to arrive at his conclusion. (...) It is not that the three Gazans were trying to do the same thing as Philoponus and failing. On the contrary (...) they had more parochial aims. On this account, it turns out to be only natural that they did not feel it necessary to refute the Platonists on their own terms” (pp. VIII-IX).

In both dialogues, a Christian opponent overcomes the positions of a fictitious pagan interlocutor, respectively “Theophrastus” in the case of Aeneas’ dialogue, and “Ammonius”, the head of the Neoplatonic school at Alexandria, in the case of Zacharias’. In Aeneas’ *Theophrastus* the main issue at stake is the destiny of the human soul, its pre-existence to body and its afterlife. Aeneas’ mouthpiece Euxitheus says: “My question is, then: has the soul lived before in this world and will it live again, or, having lived its present life, it is released from the state of affairs here?”. Since Theophrastus’ answer is that “It has lived before and will continue to live” (p. 13), a polite discussion takes place on the soul’s transmigration from one body to another after death, which predictably ends with Theophrastus’ admission of the superiority of the Christian view voiced by Euxitheus. When the latter is asked by Theophrastus to further elaborate on the general foundations of his ideas on the destiny of the human soul, Euxitheus sets forth the following account of God’s causality, cast in purely Neoplatonic terms: “God makes the things which come to be, while remaining what he is. He is not diminished by making other things, nor spent by putting forth many things: indeed, he remains all the more a Whole, the greater the multiplicity of what he fashions. The Creator is a creator not because of things that individually come to be, but from his own being” (p. 34). It is on these grounds that rests the idea, much more developed in Philoponus’ criticism of Proclus, that if one sides with eternalism for fear of having God involved in change because of the changeable nature of the created world, this means that one is not familiar with the basic rules of the Platonic doctrine of causality. Indeed, the Neoplatonic account of the causality of Plato’s intelligible Forms emphasizes that a suprasensible and timeless cause can produce the visible effects of the world of coming-to-be and passing away.

In his introduction to the *Theophrastus* (pp. 3-9), after having outlined Aeneas’ life and times, J. Dillon mentions the Platonic and Neoplatonic sources of this dialogue with special emphasis on Plotinus, whose treatises *On the Descent of Soul into the Bodies* (IV 8[6]) and *On Providence* (III 2-3[47-48]) are clearly echoed in Aeneas’ work. Dillon points also to the latter’s acquaintance with post-Plotinian Platonists: “If Aeneas, then, has a thorough knowledge of Plotinus, he is also eager to demonstrate his understanding of the Platonic tradition. (...) [T]he most recent in Platonic thought enters the dialogue with the views of Syrianus and Proclus on the soul’s reincarnation, and the distinction between three kinds of body that plays an important role in later Neoplatonism. It is against these views that Aeneas turns his polemic with the greatest success (...). Syrianus’ and Proclus’ view that reincarnation of rational souls into animal bodies consists in an outward association in particular makes an easy target” (pp. 7-8). But Syrianus and Proclus were not only the target of Aeneas’ sarcasm: perhaps unwittingly,

he was also indebted to them on the crucial doctrine that features in the passage quoted above. When Euxitheus explains to his pagan opponent that “The Creator is a creator not because of things that individually come to be, but from his own being”, he is clearly endorsing the formula of the causation “for the own being” of the principle, ἀὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι, that is based on Plotinus’ doctrine of causality, but was created by Syrianus, *In Metaph.*, pp.114.35-115.3 Kroll (in all likelihood echoing the formulae of Porphyry’s *Sent.* 13), and then largely adopted by all the subsequent Neoplatonists, especially Proclus (see e.g. *El. Th.* 122, p.108.13-17 Dodds).

In the same vein, Zacharias’ way of arguing for creation versus eternity pivots on his endorsement of the Neoplatonic rule of the independence of cause with respect to the mode of being of its effect. In Zacharias’ dialogue *Ammonius* the question of creation versus eternalism becomes prominent. As Gerts puts it in his *Introduction* (pp. 95-9), “Most significant (...) is the difference in content between the two works: the pre-existence of the soul and its reincarnation are not discussed in Zacharias’ dialogue at all, but treated at considerable length in the *Theophrastus*. On the other hand, the question of the eternity or otherwise of the world does not play a major role in Aeneas’ dialogue, but is the main subject of Zacharias’. (...) [L]ike Philoponus after him, Zacharias is eager to demonstrate how Plato, on the literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*, disagrees with Aristotle on the eternity of the world. The hostile report of Ammonius’ project of harmonising Plato and Aristotle should thus be read against this background of Christian attempts to drag Plato into the creationist camp” (pp. 97-7). In doing so, however, Zacharias does the same as Aeneas did before him: he turns against the Platonist “Ammonius” the Platonic doctrine of causality, that counts for him as the most natural account of the way in which God acts. “But in my view” says the Christian opponent of Ammonius “you people do not think that God is self-sufficient and in need of nothing and perfect, and least of all in need of what has come to be by him. For if he is not able to exist without this universe, by its existence this universe is giving him the greatest portion of himself, if not the whole, i.e. his very being. By this reasoning the universe would be his cause, not he that of the universe. For then, that which needs something else to ensure its existence (*sustasis*) would also be caused by that of which it is the cause. (...) That argument of yours turns the principle on its head and get things jumbled up, since [*sc.* on your view] God cannot exist without this universe. But if he, being good, wanted what exists to exist, not needing for his existence (for he existed before it, since he is perfect and stands in need of nothing, but is himself complete self-sufficiency), it is therefore not necessary that the product is co-eternal with its maker. The maker must be higher than his product, and the creator than what he creates, since what is made is second to the maker in cause and time” (p. 124). The point here is obviously less that of establishing whether or not this is a sound argument, than of noticing how deep the influence of the Neoplatonic causality on Zacharias’ way of reasoning is. The latter insists that the cause is greater than its effect, a principle that a Platonist should endorse and one that Zacharias thinks his opponent does not meet.

As we have seen before, Sorabji’s point in the general introduction is that “Philoponus goes beyond the Gazans in many ways (...). It is important that he almost always attacks his opponents on their own terms, quoting Christian Scripture only as an addition to the argument, and not as the main consideration, whereas the Gazans often play only to the Christian gallery” (p. xxii). This is surely true, but the force of the Neoplatonic interpretation of the causality of the supra-sensible principles spread far and wide, and influenced also writers who were in all likelihood unaware of the fact that they were crediting the God of *Genesis* with the kind of causality elaborated by Plotinus out of that of Plato’s account of the intelligible Forms.

CDA

*Controverses sur les écritures canoniques de l’Islam*, sous la direction de D. De Smet - M. A. Amir-Moezzi, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2014 (Islam. Nouvelles approches), pp. 432

This collection of essays is the output of a series of lectures organized by the “Laboratoire d’études sur les monothéismes” of the French CNRS, aiming at unravelling the origins and multi-faceted implications of the creation of the canonic Scriptures of Islam: the Qur’ān and the corpus of the *hadīths*. “Bien que l’islam soit souvent considéré comme la ‘Religion du Livre’ par excellence” say the two editors in their Introduction “l’élaboration de ses écrits canoniques – en premier lieu le Coran et le Hadith – a été un processus long et