Marian Hillar, From Logos to Trinity: The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian. Cambridge University Press, 2012. \$99.00. ISBN: 978-1-107-01330-8.

This is in many ways a remarkable book, even if in certain areas its procedure is redolent rather of the learned amateur than of the professional scholar. Not that Marian Hillar is not a substantial scholar, but his expertise appears to lie rather in the area of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology than in either Ancient Philosophy or Patristics. However, he is also the Director of the Center for Philosophy *and Socinian Studies* at Texas Southern University, which brings him much nearer to the subject at hand. We may note the mention of 'Socinian Studies', as this would seem to be the key to Hillar's interest in the range of topics presented in this book.

Socinians, it may be apposite to specify, were members of a radical Reformation international religious group that was formed originally in Poland and in Transylvania in the XVIth century, who rejected the divinity or pre-existence of Christ and the concept of God as a trinity, or triune entity, and seem generally to have been a rather admirable lot. At the roots of their religious doctrines were the anti-trinitarian speculations developed by the Spanish theologian and physician Michael Servetus (1511–1553) and transplanted to Poland by the Venetian Humanist Fausto Sozzini - or Faustus Socinus, hence 'Socinian' - as well as the social ideas borrowed initially from the Anabaptists and Moravian Brethren. Now Hillar is a lifelong admirer of the above Servetus, or Miguel Servet, also an admirable figure, who had radical views on the Trinity which he was not reticent in stating, and who was therefore in due course burnt at the stake by the Inquisition. Hillar has devoted a number of books to expounding and defending his views, and the present volume is essentially a comprehensive effort to justify Servetus by means of a thorough study of the origins of the Christian doctrines of Christ as Logos, and of God as a triadic composite of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Notwithstanding a few oddities, such as the occasional choice of obsolete or exotic secondary authorities, I would conclude that he has done a very good job of this, and that this book is a valuable contribution to scholarship – from which, I must say, I have learned a good deal.

He begins with an examination of the origins of *logos*-theory in Greek culture (ch. 1) and then in Judaism (ch. 2). His survey of the Greek material, starting with Pythagoras and Heraclitus, and proceeding, through Plato (particularly the *Timaeus* and *Philebus*) and Xenocrates, to the Stoics, is accurate and clearly set out. Plato, of course, does not have a *logos*-theory as such, but a non-literal interpretation of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* can be seen to lend itself to such a theory, and in the case of the Stoics probably did. Hillar's focus on the role of Xenocrates in this connection is well chosen, I think.

He turns next to the Judaic tradition, discussing the concepts of 'the word of God' (davar Elohim) and of his 'wisdom' (hokhmah, or Sophia), particularly in the so-called 'Wisdom' tradition, leading up to the logos-doctrine of Philo of Alexandria, which is surely of major importance for later Christian doctrine. Again, he has mastered all

this material most impressively. Philo's importance is that he combines a *logos*-theory derived from the Stoics (and probably Stoic-influenced Platonists such as Antiochus of Ascalon), with the doctrine of a transcendent, immaterial God, which is much better suited to Christian requirements than would be the materialist Stoic theory.

He next (ch. 3) adduces the Jewish Messianic tradition, or traditions, as being the other significant component making up the Christian concept of Jesus as 'the Anointed One', or Messiah. He takes us into some exotic corners, such as the Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra – documents, however, which were plainly influential both in Essene circles and among early Christian communities. The Messiah, though, as he argues, is in this tradition an essentially *human* figure, though specially chosen by Yahweh, and in that sense to be denominated 'Son of God', but not in the literalist sense adopted by gentile Christians.

Hillar turns from this, first (ch. 4), to a study of the development of Hellenistic Christian doctrine, from the 'Nazoreans' and the Ebionites to more 'orthodox' Christian groups, showing how Jewish Messianism becomes progressively 'contaminated' with Hellenic *logos*-theory, until in the mid-second century, with Justin Martyr (ch. 5), we find a first formulation of the theory of Jesus as the Logos. With Justin also the position of the Holy Spirit – the *ruah* or *pneuma* of God – begins to obtrude itself as a third element in the relationship between Father and Son.

We move on then to Tertullian at the end of the second century (chs. 7 and 8), and here I must say that I learned a good deal, having never been inclined to give Tertullian much attention. But Hillar argues plausibly that, unorthodox though Tertullian was in some ways, he may still be regarded as the substantial founder, in such as work as his treatise *Against Praxeas*, of the later Christian doctrines of both the nature of Jesus as God the Son, and the relation between the three Persons of the Trinity (indeed, he it is who coins the term 'Trinity').

By way of an appendix, Hillar takes a swipe, in ch. 9, at Thomas Aquinas and his attempt to justify the doctrine of the Trinity by reference to a series of proof texts in both Old and New Testaments, particularly certain passages from Isaiah, John, and Paul, none of which, Hillar would argue, can bear the weight being placed upon them. And so we come back to Michael Servetus, and how right he was to challenge the basis of the whole doctrine.

The work is completed by a useful appendix summarizing the sources for Christian Trinitarian concepts, and a short second one listing Egyptian chronology (since Egyptian mythology is one of the sources that Hillar would identify for concept of triads of divinities).

As I remarked at the outset, I would see this as a piece of high-class 'amateur' scholarship, which will probably bring down upon Prof. Hillar the wrath of various vested interests in the area of Patristics and Christian theology, but which I found consistently well-argued and stimulating.

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