

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

It is no doubt expected that a journal published by a Department of Classics should concern itself with the scientific study of antiquity, and the many articles in our first two numbers on ancient philosophy, especially on Plato and Neoplatonism, have perhaps gone some way towards meeting that expectation. But it is the intention of the editors that the interests of *Dionysius* should be broader than that; our claim to a distinct place in the world of Classical journals rests upon our stated policy that we are concerned with "ancient philosophy (Greek and Latin) and its relation to Christian belief in ancient and modern times." Thus, without dogmatic attachment to any religious or philosophical position, we look for articles "which may be regarded as a contribution to the understanding and criticism of contemporary culture and its antique origins."

Those who are familiar with the professional divisions which generally prevail in academic life will readily recognize the difficulty of our enterprise. Students of Plato hesitate to speak of Bonaventure or Thomas More; students of modern literature usually have little to say about Dante, Virgil or Homer. Yet the fabric of our history is of continuous design, and no part of it makes very satisfactory sense without its context. Thus, Thomas Aquinas will not reveal his meaning without Aristototele, and, conversely, one may even venture to add, with Pico della Mirandola, "*Sine Toma, mutus esset Aristoteles*". As Lady Philosophy reminds Boethius, her finely-woven garment is indissoluble, though violent men tear fragments from it and abscond with them. The integrity and vitality of Classical studies require that we concern ourselves with the whole range of the on-going interpretation of the ancient authors. It has therefore been our policy to publish articles on medieval and modern subjects when the treatment of those subjects is such as to show their relation to ancient thought and culture. The number of such articles in our first two numbers was regrettably small; we hope that the present issue shows a better balance.

One of the main areas of our interest is the relation between Christianity and Classical culture, not only in late antiquity, but through the whole course of our history. Particularly since the time of the Reformation, this has been one of the major problems of historians and theologians, whether Protestant or Catholic. If Isaac Casaubonus, a Reformed divine, was able to trace the corruption of primitive Christianity under the influence of pagan cults, his

Catholic counterpart, Dionysius Petavius, was equally able to identify the pernicious influence of "Platonic trinities" in the development of pre-Nicene theology. Most violent of seventeenth-century critics, Theophilus Gale, demonstrating an astonishing facility for tracing all the corruptions of primitive Christianity to heathen philosophy, concluded that "the whole of this Mystic Monkish Divinitie seems to be but a mere Pythagorian and Platonic fable" (*The Court of the Gentiles*, vol. 3, p. 152), and then went on to treat "Scholastic Theologie" in similar terms. The notion that hellenization means deterioration was repeated by a host of later authors, such as Gottfrid Arnold, Matthieu Souverain (*Le Platonisme dévoilé*), Johann Lorenz Mosheim (the "Father of Church History"), Joseph Priestly, Edward Gibbon, Adolf von Hamack, and many others, and is echoed by many of our contemporaries who look for a "pure" Christianity behind the "corruptions" introduced by Greek philosophy.

There has been, and is, of course, another side to this debate, and the question remains. Just what is hellenism, and what is its relation to Christianity, whether in ancient, or medieval, or modern times? And we do not easily resolve such a question, for we live with a history and tradition in which those strands are intimately interwoven. Are we not already "Greeks" when we ask the question? Can we think without "hellenizing"?

*Dionysius* will continue to publish detailed studies of ancient authors, and we shall continue the effort to balance our fare with relevant articles on medieval and modern subjects, whether literary, philosophical, or theological (Christian and non-Christian). We regard this work as fundamental for the understanding and criticism of our own culture, ancient and modern. The generous response of both writers and readers has been most encouraging for our infant enterprise; our success in achieving our aims must depend largely upon their continued zeal.

Robert Crouse