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Soul and Body: The Two Images of the Androgynous LOGOS in Marius Victorinus Adversus Arium

In his last article on Marius Victorinus, in 1994, Pierre Hadot says that the presence in the Adversus Arium of an androgynous Logos is a question that is still open and that it would necessarily suppose a gnostic influence on Victorinus.

In this paper, I will expose the argumentation of Marius Victorinus that leads him to his conclusion that the Logos is androgynous. Then I will take a fresh look at the possible philosophical sources of Victorinus, since recent studies (by Tardieu and Hadot (1994) on a source common to both Marius Victorinus and the author of the Nag Hammadi text Zostrianos, by Bechtle (1999) on the Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Parmenides and by Turner (2000) on the Nag Hammadi text Zostrianos) invite us to re-examine the hypothesis of an exclusive Porphyrian source for the Adversus Arium, hypothesis supported by Pierre Hadot in 1968.

We read in the Book 1B of the Adversus Arium that there is, in the principle of the Universe, a motionless One who is Existence, Life and Intellect, and who is prior to all existing things. From this motionless One, a self-moving Second-One generates and gives birth in a circular movement (hypostased as the Life) to a monad, the Father, and a dyad, the Logos. The Logos is composed of a male principle, the Supreme-Noetic-Son and a female principle, the Pneumatic-Perfect-Wisdom/Life.

As a Christian, Victorinus has to expose and defend his faith. In an exegesis of Genesis 1, 26-27, he finds it necessary to explain the manner in which the expressions "in our image, after our likeness" and "male and female he created them" must be understood. He first exposes the idea that the Logos, in its circular movement, realises an "Image of God". So then, in what manner can man be considered as created in the image of the Logos Victorinus say the Man is the Soul and that this soul is composed of a four-powered body made up of two souls each of which possessing its own noûs. This Soul (or the Man) possessed in itself, by its own Noûs, a moving principle which is, by virtue of its likeness to the Logos, a moving principle, which is Life. It is in this movement that the soul can be said "in the image of God" because it has in itself the Life.

Victorinus also addresses the question of how it can be possible that the material body could have been created "in the image of God"? Earlier in the Adversus Arium, he had discussed the idea that the Logos is composed of a male principle, the Supreme-Noetic-Son and a female principle, the Pneumatic-Perfect-Wisdom/Life. He explains that the Pneuma, which is also Intelligence, and the Logos, which is Life can be understood to be the same thing in the Life's self-movement. He concludes that, in fact, the Logos is its own son because its origin lies in the self-moving circular movement of the Life and is in fact the principle of his own existence. Thus, Man, who was created "masculofemina" in the image and likeness of God is in fact in the image of the androgyny of the Logos which is itself the true image of God.

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