

Heimgartner's careful new edition and translation of the Syriac all the more welcome and significant. The rest of the introduction deals with the date of the Disputation, the form and structure of the work, and the question of whether it is a literary fiction (as has been suggested by some) or a written-up record of a genuine dialogue (as seems more probable). The annotated translation is very carefully done, and is a considerable improvement on that of Mingana, who took a number of liberties. Heimgartner's edition and translation should henceforth be taken as the authoritative source of reference for all citation of this important (and still relevant) example of Christian-Muslim dialogue.

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Vita e studi di Timoteo I (†823). Patriarca cristiano di Baghdad. Ricerche sull'epistolario e sulle fonti contigue. By Vittorio Berti. (Chrétien en terre d'Iran III. Cahiers de Studia Iranica, 41.) Pp. 400. Paris: Association pur l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2009. €60 (paper). 978 2 910640 27 9; 0993 8699
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This is the most important and comprehensive monograph written to date on Timothy I, East Syrian patriarch from 780 to 823. It completes, corrects and replaces in many respects the works of Bidawid (*Studia Theologica* clxxxvii [1956]) and Putman (Recherches publiée sous la direction de L'Institut de Lettres Orientales de Beyrouth B 3, 1975). Berti portrays Timothy for the first time in detail in the context of Syrian monachism and Syrian educational tradition, showing him at the peak of the development that begins with the school reform of Babai the Musician (pp. 90–110). Berti does not aim to provide an overall picture of Timothy's life and theology, but focuses precisely on the context of education and its politics (the title of his doctoral thesis, 'Contesto formativo e vita culturale di Timoteo I', Padua 2006, which was thoroughly revised and expanded for publication, reinforces this point). As for Timothy's biography, up to his controversial election as a patriarch, Berti's study is exhaustive. The history of Thomas of Marga, widely underestimated until now, is taken into account for the first time in its profundity with many important corrections to the works of Fiey. Also the introductory questions concerning the letter *corpus* including transmission, numbering, further fragments and – in contrast to Bidawid – precise dating are treated exhaustively. A brilliant hypothesis suggests that the letter *corpus* as transmitted to us goes back to the collection of Timothy's friend Sergius and should be distinguished from the 200 letters mentioned by 'Abdisho'. Thus Berti explains why forty-two of the fifty-nine letters are addressed to Sergius (pp. 62–3). Also, for the remaining letters, he demonstrates convincingly why they entered Sergius' collection (pp. 63–4). Throughout the book, Berti quotes innumerable important and often even longer translated passages of letters that have only been accessible in Syriac or in Latin until now. By doing this, he does not only provide a summary, but he contextualises these passages in a way that throws light on many topics such as Sergius' activity in Elam. These translations also contain passages from the thirteen as yet unpublished letters (letters 42, 44–6, 49 and 51–8). Some

of them, as for instance letter 45 (p. 247), are quoted almost in their entirety. This book therefore replaces Bidawid's summaries, which until now had to be consulted for the content of these letters. Even after the publication of the critical edition and translation of letters 42–58 (Heimgartner, forthcoming end of 2011), Berti's translations and explications of the texts will remain important. The debate with Islam is deliberately omitted (for more on this see *Timotheos I., ostsyrischer Patriarch: Disputation mit dem Kalifen Al-Mahdi*, ed. Martin Heimgartner, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium dcxxxi and dcxxxii, Leuven 2011).

It is my hope that this outstanding monograph¹, though written in Italian, will be widely read and perhaps even translated into other languages.

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Philosophie et théologie de l'image dans les Libri Carolini. By Kristina Mitalaité.

(Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes, 43.) Pp. 551. Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2007.

€47.39 (paper). 978 2 85121 218 4; 1159 4888

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This lengthy monograph gives an excellent account of how and why the *Opus Caroli Regis contra synodum* (which the author continues to call the *Libri Carolini*) links discussion of icons to a discussion of the Trinity. The book opens with a good summary of the structure of the *Opus Caroli*, though I should have liked to have learned how Mitalaité thinks the work was composed and what the status of Charlemagne's marginal comments might be. Successive chapters treat the work's attitude to natural images (found in a mirror and in a rainbow) and artificial images, the understanding of *persona* as it relates to Christ, the Trinity and society, Byzantine and early Carolingian attitudes to miracles and eschatology. The final section is entitled 'élite carolingienne et image'. The reader who can navigate past maxims such as 'la parole est le seul moyen sensible capable de transgresser deux espaces divergeant' and a propensity to refer to Plato and Cicero and to give extensive treatments of the development of Greek patristic doctrine will find a good discussion of what the *Opus Caroli* says about images and signs and about the Trinity. There are helpful sections on the treatment of David, the Spanish sources for some of Theodulf's thought, Alcuin's Trinitarian theology and early Carolingian attitudes to word and voice. Annexes list the vocabulary for artificial images and of voice and speaking. The account of the Carolingian religious elite is less convincing, and Mitalaité seems unaware of recent work by Helmut Nagel and Stefan Patzold. The proofreading of author's names in the footnotes is particularly careless.

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¹ The following corrections may be useful. In the list of datings on pp. 60–2 letter 47 has been overlooked: it dates to about 800 (see p. 55). The article by Isebaert-Cauuet mentioned on p. 344–57 is missing from the bibliography: 'Les Pères grecs dans les commentaires syriaques', in Andrea Schmidt and Dominique Gonnet (eds), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque*, Paris 2007, 77–88.