

BOOK REVIEW

Gaj, Beata: Time of Heresy. Haeresis – error – hallucinatio: The Book of Various Religious Opinions of Philaster of Brescia (4th century AD).

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It is not uncommon for works of genuine scholarly value—publications that are both intellectually engaging and of considerable importance—to attract only limited attention. Such appears to be the case with the modest volume presenting the first English translation of *On Heresies* (*Liber de haeresibus*) by Philaster of Brescia (also known as Philastrius, *Philaster/Filaster Brixienensis*). This bishop, later venerated as a saint, composed his catalogue of heresies in the latter half of the fourth century, enumerating more than one hundred teachings deemed heretical by proponents of orthodox doctrine.

The text is of undeniable significance, not only because it served as a crucial source for Augustine of Hippo, but also because it affords valuable insight into the conceptual world of early Christianity. As Beata Gaj emphasizes in her introduction, when considering the notion of heresy (*haeresis*), one must recognize that deviation from orthodoxy did not always entail conscious opposition; in many instances, it reflected misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Scripture.

Following this clarification, the translator provides a succinct account of Philaster's life and of what can be established concerning the historical and intellectual context in which the work was composed. Attention is also given to the text's relationship with Epiphanius of Salamis's catalogue of heresies, its additional sources, and the structural principles underlying its composition. The introduction concludes with a concise yet comprehensive overview of the work as a whole, accompanied by a discussion of the translation's guiding principles.

The translation is based on F. Heylen's edition of *Liber de haeresibus*, published in the *Corpus Christianorum* series in 1957, which it follows closely in both text and layout. This fidelity, however, does not amount to mechanical adherence. The translator not only relies on the main text of the edition but also draws attention to textual variants in the footnotes. Moreover, in rendering the introduction to the work, she demonstrates a concern that extends beyond a literal translation of biblical passages.

At the outset of Philaster of Brescia's treatise, Jeremiah 17:11 is cited: "The partridge cried out, she gathered those whom she did not engender, foolishly accumulating wealth for herself. In the middle of the day they left her, and in the end she will be left alone, stupid." (*Clamavit*

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perdix, collegit quae non parturiit, faciens sibi divitias non cum sapientia, in medio dierum derelinquent eum, et in postremo erit insipiens.) It is evident that Philaster drew on the Septuagint text (ἐφώνησεν πέρδιξ, συνήγαγεν ἃ οὐκ ἔτεκεν), followed also by Jerome in his translation of Origen's homilies (*Clamavit perdix, congregavit quae non peperit, faciens divitias suas non cum iudicio. In medio dierum eius derelinquent eum, et novissimis suis erit insipiens*), although Jerome later revised his rendering in the Commentary on Jeremiah (*Perdix fovit (sive congregavit) quae non peperit*).

Philaster's translator preserves the sense of the original, departing at points from established English versions in order to reflect the nuances of the Latin text. In the accompanying note, she highlights the divergence between the biblical citation and analogous motifs in ancient Egyptian, Persian, Greek, and Roman traditions. Whereas early Christian exegesis interpreted the partridge allegorically as a figure of Satan, in these other cultural contexts it most often symbolized fertility and rebirth; in Plato, moreover, the partridge served as a symbol of virtue and self-mastery. This broad comparative perspective—one that inevitably reflects, as well, the translator's own intellectual and cultural background—is a defining feature of the volume as a whole.

The annotations accompanying the catalogue of heresies are particularly valuable. Each heresy is elucidated by brief but highly informative notes, which situate Philaster's descriptions within their wider intellectual and historical contexts. In instances where the chosen English equivalent for a Latin expression does not, in the translator's view, convey the full semantic range of the original, alternative renderings are provided in the notes. On the whole, the annotations are judicious and facilitate the interpretation of the text; in certain cases, they also point the reader toward further engagement with secondary literature.

The translation of the Latin text may be described as both elegant and accessible. The translator remains faithful to the source, yet without rigid literalism; rather, the rendering reflects a careful adaptation to the idiom and stylistic requirements of the target language. The translated text extends from page 14 to page 100 and is accompanied by approximately one hundred footnotes. These are followed by a bibliography that includes both printed and electronic sources, as well as an alphabetical index of heresies, which greatly facilitates navigation and lends the volume the character of a practical reference tool.

Owing to its clarity and accessibility, the work is particularly suitable for readers engaged in the study of patristic literature, and especially for those concerned with the doctrines of groups designated as heretical in antiquity. For such an audience, Beata Gaj's volume constitutes both a valuable introduction and a reliable resource for further inquiry.