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IV. VOCABULARY

There follows a list of words or usages which occur in the writings of Victorinus and which, so far as I am aware, are not found in Latin literature before his time:¹

accidentalis, actualis, adintellegentia, adsequella, alsito, alteritas, altifico, ametabolus, amphilipes, amplexio, animaliter, antecantatiuus, antistoechia, antistrophe, antistrophos, apomizon, apostrofo, archilochicus, arhythmia, asclepiadicus, asma, aspargen, astrologice, astructio, autogonus, biduanculus, bigeminus, bipotens, blasphemiter, bustrophedon, calabrius, calculatio, christianitas, circumformo, circuminspector, circumpungo, circumtermino, circumuitalis, coaedificatio, coexistis, cognoscentia, completiuus, conductor, confragose, conaturalis, consuero, consistentia, constitutiuis, corrationaliter, conio, cunitio, decameter, decasemus, decasyllabus, declaratiuus, decurtatio, depositio, dicolia, diestigmenon, dirhythmus, discernibilis, disemos, disertitudo, dualiter, duodecachronus, duodecasemus, effatio, effluentia, effulgenter, effulgentia, elambo, elegiambus, elucescentia, embaterios, empyrius, enoplios, ens, entusiasmos, enuntiatus (4th decl.), erector, essentialitas, essentias, explanatiuus, exsequenter, existentialis, existentialiter, exterminatio, filiatio, filietas, gignibilis, grammaticalis, heptachronus, heptasemus, hexachronus, hexasemus, hylicus, hymnidicus, hyporchematicus, iambographus, identitas, imaginalis, immaculatio, imparticipatus, impassiona(bi)liter, imperfectio, inactuosus, incarnaliter, incidentia, incognoscibiliter, incommutabiliter, incongrue, inconiunctus, inconsonus, incontinuus, indeterminatio, indiscernibilis, inexistentialiter, inexistis, infiguratus, ingenerabilis, inimmutabilis, innoetus, insensualis, insubstantialis, insubstantiatus, insufflatio, intellectibilis, intellectualiter, intellectuo, intellegentialis, intellegentialis, intellegentitas, intermixtio, internundinium, intracaelestis, inuersabilis, inuersibilis, leuianimus, limitamentum, mascularis, materialiter, metroiacus, monometrum, monophonos, monopodia, monosemus, monostrophos, mutilatio, neomenia (*neuter plural*), noscentia, nouissimalis, obauditor, octachronos, octasemus, omniconoscens, omniconoscencia, omniconsistens, omniconsistentia, omniintellegens, omniintellegentia, omnipotentia, omniuidens, omniuidentia, omniuiuens, omniuiuentia, optimitas, paganismus, paganus (*in the sense "pagan"*), palmalis, parauxesis, pentachronus, pentasemus, pericope, pertermine, phallicus, pinsitor, plusquamperfectus, pompicus, possibilitas, postcantatiuus, postnatiuus, potentialis, potentialiter, potentifico, practicos, praecaeaternus, praecausa, praecognoscentia, praedicamentum, praeconsistentia, praeconsistentialis, praeconsistis, praecintellegentia, praenoscentia, praepincipalis, praepincipium, praeeudentia, praeeuuentia, praeeuiuo, priapicos, primiforme (*in the sense "prototype"*), primiformis, priuantia, proexsilio, proodicus, propitiator, prosodiacus, pygnotus, quadripotens, realis, receptibilis, reparatio, reuersim, reuersus (4th decl.), reuiuofacio, reuiuoficentia, rhythmopoeia, risibilis, saluatio, scansio (*in the sense of metrical "scansion"*), scissio, semipodius, semisona, serpentinus, soriticus, sotericus, sphaeropaectes, spondaules, stasimum, stichus, subalternus, subauditor, subintellegentia, subsistentia, substantiatus (*ptc.*), subtractio, supercino, superelatiuus, supracaelestis, syllabicos, syllogistice (*adv.*),

¹ Other limited word-lists of Victorinus are given in the Vienna *Corpus* xlviii, pp. 354 ff. (asterisked words); E. Benz, *Marius Victorinus*, pp. 432 ff.; A. Souter, *Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 31 ff. "Victorinus' latinity deserves a monograph", says Prof. Souter, "after the fashion in which Tertullian, Cyprian, Hilary, Jerome, and others have already been studied" (op. cit., p. 30). This need I attempted to meet some years ago in a thesis (thus far unpublished) written for the Croom Robertson Fellowship of Aberdeen University.

synodus, teliambos, telios, tetrachronos, tetracolia, tetrapodia, tetrarhythmus, tetrasemos, theoreticos, traductiuus, trichronos, tridynamus, trimoeros, tripenthemimeres, tripotens, trirhythmus, trisemos, trisyntetos, uersibilis, uersidicus, uisibiliter, uisiuus (?), uiuefacio, uiuentia, unalis, unalitas, unitio, unitor, uniuoce, usitatio, uultuo, zizania (*feminine singular*).¹

We need not suppose, of course, that Victorinus introduced all these words into the Latin language. Some of them are merely transliterations of Greek words which were previously quite well known in their original form, and the manuscripts frequently vary between the Greek and Latin spellings. (This is particularly so with metrical terms.) Others, again, are interesting words which he cites as examples in his grammatical and other works. Of the remainder, some are used by his contemporaries, and we cannot say with certainty which writer was the first to use them. We cannot even be sure of those words for which the lexicons cite Victorinus as the sole authority. For example, *realis* is quoted from him only, but Victorinus himself apparently refers to earlier unnamed authorities for the word: "alii hanc constitutionem *realem* uocarunt" (*Rhet.* 1.8, p. 180, l. 20). But after all such allowances have been made, we are left with a very large residuum of words which we certainly owe to Victorinus himself. Many of these were current coin in medieval literature, and have persisted to the present day in the languages of western Europe. Besides, to many words which had other senses before his day he gave new meanings which have remained attached to them ever since his time. Not to go outside the preceding list of words, the only meanings we attach to the words "pagan" and "scansion" are the meanings given by Victorinus to *paganus* and *scansio*. He was not the first person to use *paganus* in the sense of "pagan", of course, but he was the first, so far as we know, to raise this sense to literary status.

V. STYLE

Of the style of Victorinus many hard things have been said. Jerome set the example. "Victorinus, natione Afer", he writes,

¹ It is noteworthy how many of the real Latin words in this list have survived through medieval Latin into modern European languages. Sometimes, indeed, their meaning has changed considerably. For example, there is a wide difference between the modern sense given to "existential" by the Barthian school (who have taken it from Kierkegaard) and the sense in which it was used (and very likely coined) by Victorinus. It is remarkable that this watchword of the Theology of Crisis should have been coined in the interests of a system of thought which the Theology of Crisis condemns root and branch!

“ Romae sub Constantio principe rhetoricam docuit et in extrema senectute Christi se tradens fidei scripsit *Aduersus Arium* libros more dialectico ualde obscuros, qui nisi ab eruditis non intelleguntur, et commentarios in Apostolum ” (*De Viris Illustribus* 101). The *eruditi* must here mean the philosophers, and Jerome, whose own great erudition was of the linguistic and textual sort, was no doubt unable to understand and appreciate Victorinus. In this, of course, he was quite different from Augustine, whose greater genius and philosophical insight perceived and valued the worth of the man who first introduced him to the thought of Plotinus and Porphyry.

J. Sirmond (*Opera uaria*, tom. i, between cols. 344 and 345) says that he places two (alleged) works of Victorinus after others which were actually later in date because of his “ *obscuritas, quae primo in limine fuisset ingrator. Ceterum, obscuritatem hanc Victorinus in dogmaticis praecipue libris sectatus uidetur. In commentariis enim aliquot epistolarum S. Pauli, quos idem codex continebat, stylus planior et apertior* ”.

Others who mention him at various times refer to this obscurity with more or less censure, and their opinions are summed up thus by Bp. Gore (*Dictionary of Christian Biography* iv, pp. 1130 f.):

All these writings of Victorinus (with the exception of the commentaries which make a nearer approach to lucidity) are intensely obscure. It is matter of astonishment that one who had Victorinus's reputation as a rhetorician should have been so wholly incapable of giving clear expression to his thoughts. His intense obscurity in treating theological subjects of themselves recondite, aggravated by the extremely corrupt condition of the text as hitherto edited, the barbarous mixture of Greek and bad Latin which he often writes, his prolixity and his repetitions, have been the causes of his being ignored more than is at all justified by his substantial merits. He has wearied the very few people who have tried to read him beyond their patience, and they have almost wholly missed his significance. Those who have read him have mostly done nothing but complain of him. “ He wrote ”, says Jerome, “ in a dialectical style some very obscure books, intelligible only to the learned ” (*De Vir. Illustr. ci*). He condemns him, moreover, as a man so occupied in secular literature as to have ignored Holy Scripture (*Epist. ad Galat. Prologus*), a judgment reversed by Augustine (*Conf. viii. 2*) and the evidence of his works. Petavius, besides accusing him of a heretical tendency, matched him with Heraclitus as *ὁ σκοτεινός*, and condemned him as “ *incommodè balbutientem* ” (*De Trin. i. v. §8*). Such commentators as he has had show scant patience with him (see Migne's edition p. 1179, note 3; 1245, note 3; 1265, note 4). He is “ *obscurissimus* ”, “ *barbarus* ”, “ *ferreus* ”. Tillemont would not trouble himself to search his works (*Mém. Eccl.*, vol. x, p. 799, l. 4). Ceillier (*Auteurs Sacrés*) commends him with an utter want of appreciation of his peculiar position. Dorner ignores him. But there is one notable exception to these severe judgments on Victorinus's style and matter and these ignorings of his significance. Thomassin, whose

theological judgment is a weighty one, speaks of him as a man "inferior to none in the profundity of his insight into the inmost mysteries" of the Divine Being, and the relation of the persons of the Trinity to one another (*De Incarn. Verbi*, B. ii, cap. i, §6).

A novice might well be deterred from the study of Victorinus if he paid attention to most of these judgments. But Gore's statement that "he has wearied the very few people who have tried to read him beyond their patience" is not so true to-day as it may have been in 1887. Patience is certainly needed to read and appreciate Victorinus, but several of his readers who have exercised this virtue have found their patience amply rewarded.

But we shall do well to review one by one the extant works which are undoubtedly his. There must surely have been some very good reason why one of the foremost rhetoricians of his day should write so obscurely as to incur these reproaches. What do we find in his writings themselves? The *Ars Grammatica* and the accompanying small treatises, both in their grammatical and metrical parts, are as plain and lucid as could be desired. There is, to be sure, a fair amount of repetition here and there, but that is only what we should expect in works which were in the first instance delivered as spoken lectures.¹

The little work *De Definitionibus* is perhaps somewhat prolix, but certainly not in the least obscure. As for the *Explanationes in Rhetoricam Ciceronis*, if they bring down upon the author's head the editor's withering remark, "scriptor tædii plenus" (Halm, *Rhet. lat. min.*, p. viii), it is prolixity and not obscurity which is responsible. Certainly it is a wearisome and for the most part unoriginal treatise. Victorinus may have been professionally wedded to Rhetoric, but the object of his *grande passion* was Philosophy. Wherever he comes upon a philosophical reference in the course of his commentaries, he must inevitably digress. It may have been these digressions which provoked Halm's censure. At any rate, Victorinus seems to have grown weary of this treatise himself, as we may gather from the increasing rapidity with which he deals with the later part of the *De Inventione*. (His comments on the 55 chapters of Book I occupy over 102 pages of Halm's edition; those on the 59 chapters of Book II only 47!) But the treatise is by no means obscure. In

¹ Keil (*GL* vi, p. xxvi) remarks on the custom at that time for grammarians to repeat their work, writing first in a style intended for the education of the young, and then in a manner suitable for learned readers. There is some evidence of such a twofold purpose in Victorinus's grammatical work.

all these works his style is of the type known to the ancients as *ἰσχυρόν* or *tenue*.

Turning to the theological works, we find that the commentaries on the Pauline epistles are specifically exempted from the general charge of obscurity. Jerome complains of them, too, it is true, but not on the ground of obscurity. Sirmond, as we have just seen, speaks of their style as *planior et apertior*, and this verdict is endorsed by Koffmane, Gore, Monceaux, Souter, and others who have written on the subject. Here, too, Victorinus is very guilty of prolixity and repetition, but his sense is for the most part quite plain. "He does not altogether escape obscurity: p. 1207, ll. 25 ff. and 34 ff. are good examples of the difficulty occasionally to be experienced in following him, but on the whole what want of clearness there is may be charged to the MS. tradition" (A. Souter, *op. cit.*, p. 28). As a matter of fact, the passages mentioned by Professor Souter are quite in the style of the other theological works and can be paralleled from these. Their obscurity is due to causes which we are just about to deal with. They occur in the course of the exposition of the well-known Christological passage in Phil. ii. 5 ff., and are to be considered in the light of the two Christological treatises *De Generatione Verbi Divini* and *Adversus Arrium*.

These two treatises, then, are alone responsible for bringing upon their author the charge of obscurity. It is these which cause Gore to say: "It is matter of astonishment that one who had Victorinus's reputation as a rhetorician should have been so wholly incapable of giving clear expression to his thoughts." The explanation, however, is not far to seek. Schanz (*op. cit.*, p. 150) shows us the way out of the difficulty:

People have complained of the great obscurity in his theological writings; this obscurity is illuminated only when the Neoplatonic standpoint is taken as the basis for their study.

The fact is, most of the obscure passages are almost literal translations of the language of Greek Neoplatonic writers. Victorinus's extensive borrowings from Plotinus have been recognised and noted by such authorities as L. Thomassin (*Dogmata theologica*, tom. i, p. 101), M. N. Bouillet (French translation of *Enneads*, vol. ii, pp. 554 ff.), G. Geiger (*C. Marius Victorinus Afer*, pp. 17 ff.), E. Benz (*Marius Victorinus und die Entwicklung der abendländischen Willensmetaphysik*, *passim*), and, most recently, by P. Henry (*Plotin et l'Occident*), who, after

comparing several passages in Victorinus with the *Enneads*, states his conclusions unhesitatingly as follows (p. 60):

Not only must he have read the *Enneads*, but he assimilated them to the point of reproducing their general tone, sometimes quoting extracts from them, reproducing technical formulae in the course of the argument. In a word, the mentality of his philosophico-theological writings is purely "Plotinian".

Père Henry traces the influence of Plotinus not only in the syntax and style of Victorinus, but in his vocabulary as well, especially in his many compounds with *prae* and *super* and with the negative prefix *in*; the latter compounds being used when finite attributes are applied to God *via negationis*, the former when they are predicated of Him *sensu eminentiore*.

The obscurity of the style of the dogmatic works is largely dispelled, then, when we read them in the light of the language of the *Enneads*; and, if there are still difficulties remaining, let us remember the exceedingly abstract and recondite nature of the thoughts which Victorinus was endeavouring to express and the fact that he was probably the first to give a systematic exposition in Latin of the Neoplatonic philosophy.

Monceaux (p. 416) suggests that familiarity with the ideas of Origen as well as of Plotinus is necessary for a proper understanding of Victorinus; this is probably an overstatement, and on a par with his statement (p. 397) that Victorinus translated the writings of Origen. Benz, however (pp. 23 ff.), proves conclusively that the Victorinus mentioned by Jerome (*ep.* 84.7 and *adu. Rufin.* iii. 14) as a translator of Origen was not our author but the martyr-bishop of Pettau (died c. 303). There are, of course, several points of contact between our Victorinus and Origen, as is only to be expected when we consider the profound influence of Neoplatonism on the Alexandrian school. One very obvious instance of Victorinus's indebtedness to Origen may be seen in his insistence on the Eternal Generation of the Divine Word, a thought first worked out by Origen and accepted from him by the Catholic Church. The treatise *De Generatione Verbi Diuini* in particular develops this idea in considerable detail. Again, Victorinus's doctrine of the Trinity, like Origen's, is frankly subordinationist. But there seems to be no *general* influence of Origen on Victorinus. Benz sums up the matter thus in the closing words of his appendix on *Viktorin und Origenes* (op. cit., pp. 422 ff.):

Thus the theology of Victorinus does not stand in the tradition of Origen's philosophy of religion, but represents an independent Christianising of the Neoplatonic metaphysic on Latin soil.¹

In the extract from Gore quoted above, Victorinus's obscurity of expression is said to be aggravated, among other things, by "the barbarous mixture of Greek and bad Latin which he often writes, his prolixity and his repetitions". That there is an unusually high proportion of Greek words is true, in his pre-Christian writings as well as in his theological works. The *GVD*, in particular, as Monceaux says, "bristles" (*frissonne*) with Greek words. Sometimes the words and phrases are given in the original Greek form; sometimes they are latinised. That this does not enhance the beauty of the Latin style may be granted at once; but surely it does not add to the obscurity. It is surely clearer to retain τὸ ὄν ἢ τὸ μὴ ὄν than to attempt a Latin rendering, and τὸ εἶναι is certainly better than the circumlocution *quod est esse*, so common in the writings of Victorinus. Besides, to one acquainted with the terminology of Greek philosophy and theology the sense is immediately apparent as it would not be if native Latin equivalents were attempted throughout. "Barbarous" the mixture may indeed be, but better neat and intelligible Greek on occasion than clumsy and unintelligible Latin.

There remains the charge of prolixity and repetition, and that we must freely admit. It is our author's worst fault by far, and if his writings are wearisome, it is not because of their difficulty (which ought rather to serve as a stimulus to discover the intricate thoughts which so severely tax the expressive powers of the Latin tongue), but because of this excessive wordiness.

VI. TEXT

A word now on the text of those works which have not yet been critically edited. The Migne reprint is a reliable reproduction of the texts copied. These are the Galland edition for the works printed in *PL* viii, 999c-1146d, and the Mai edition (the *editio princeps*) for the rest of the theological works, viz. the Pauline commentaries and the pseudo-Victorinian *De Physicis*. A collation of the Migne text with those of Galland and Mai has revealed no serious faults in copying.

¹ As regards another alleged influence of Origen, Professor Souter says: "The question whether Victorinus used Origen for his commentary on Ephesians is to be answered in the negative, as no certain case of borrowing can be produced" (*op. cit.*, pp. 26 f.).

The Latin of the Pauline commentaries being comparatively simple and non-technical, the text of these works has not suffered much in the course of transmission. Some account of their text, with several suggested emendations, is given by Professor Souter (op. cit., pp. 9-14). His verdict is: "The text itself may be said to be in a fairly good state, especially if we consider the date of the manuscript" (p. 10).¹

The text of the more dogmatic works is not in such a happy condition. "The extremely corrupt condition of the text as hitherto edited," to quote Gore again, is largely due to the high technicality of the language of these works, and has added greatly to the difficulty of studying them. Particularly unsatisfactory is the text of *GVD*. The tradition preserved in the printed texts in J. Herold's *Orthodoxographia* (Basel, 1555) and J. Ziegler's *Expositio in Genesim et Exodum* (Lyons, 1585) is considerably different from that found in J. Mabillon's *Analecta* (Paris, 1723). Of the two traditions the latter is the more trustworthy; the Galland text, reprinted in Migne, is a hotch-potch of the two. A list of *variorum* readings is given in footnotes in Migne.²

The four books *Against Arius* have also suffered in transmission. The Galland-Migne text has not only many errors in spelling, wording and punctuation, but also several omissions (due mainly to homoeoteleuton) which play havoc with the sense.³ For these four books, as for the *De ὁμοουσίῳ recipiendo* and the three *Hymns on the Trinity*, I have used a rotograph copy of the MS. Phillipps 1684 in the Prussian State Library, Berlin. This MS. (which may be referred to as P) has a common archetype with the Galland-Migne text, but shows a much superior text, by means of which I have corrected the Migne edition. Gore used this MS., then in the Cheltenham Library, for his article on Victorinus in *DCB*. A full account of it is given by Valentin Rose in his *Verzeichniss der lateinischen HSS der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, vol. i (1893): "Die Meerman-Handschriften des Sir Thomas Phillipps", No. 15, pp. 14 ff.

¹ The MS. in question is the Vatican MS. Ottobonian 3288a, assigned by Prof. Souter to the fourteenth (by J. Haussleiter to the fifteenth) century. This was one of the three MSS. used by Mai, the other two being Ottobonian 3288b (a copy of the preceding), and Vatican 3546 (a copy of one or other of the preceding two).

² See also Benz, op. cit., p. 431.

³ E.g., in *Ar.* 1. 17.1051a, two verses (Rom. viii. 10 f.) are omitted from the Scripture quotation on line 2 in Migne, but are preserved in P. In *Ar.* 4.23.1129c the context shows that the true reading is *ex omniexistenti omniexistencia* for *ex omniexistencia* of both Migne and P.

Rose, who assigns it to the tenth century, calls it the oldest and most important MS. of the theological writings of Marius Victorinus.¹ Even on the basis of this MS. alone, a better text could be constructed than that available in Migne; and it will obviously be indispensable to any future editor of the theological works of Victorinus.

But the editing of these works will require further equipment than the best available manuscript material. The nature of this further equipment has been indicated by Père Henry (*Plotin et l'Occident*, p. 241):

When, in obedience to the demands of present-day philology, someone thinks of re-editing the "Neoplatonic" works of Marius Victorinus (such as, for example, the *Aduersus Arium*), he will bear in mind that they have been deeply influenced not only by Plotinus's ideas, but by his style. We sometimes hear it said, as was lately said of the *Enneads*, that they are unintelligible. That is chiefly the fault of the copyists, who would have had no comprehension of what they were writing. In this case, the humble monks of the *scriptoria* might well be excused, and their corporation could invoke St. Jerome as its patron. The editor of the *Aduersus Arium* will need much courage; he must read and re-read the *Enneads* of Plotinus, without growing weary, at the same time as the work which he is editing.

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