

DISCOURSES AGAINST JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS by St John Chrysostom, trans. by Paul W Harkins: *The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation*, vol 68. *The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D C \$24.00.*

Near the main door of the Cathedral of Toledo there is a large mural depicting the legend of the crucifixion of a Christian child at the hands of Jews. John Chrysostom would have approved the strategy: fresh from the celebration of the mystery of God's love for man, of the breaking down of the dividing-wall of hostility, Christians are to step out into their city past a visual incitement to hatred for Jews.

The eight sermons translated here were preached at Antioch by John Chrysostom, probably in the years 386-387. The translator feels justified in calling the collection *Against Judaizing Christians* "rather than giving it the less irenic and somewhat misleading traditional title *Against the Jews*" (p xxxi). It is certainly true that the principal goal of Chrysostom in preaching these sermons was to constrain Judaizing Christians to sever all ties with the synagogue and Jewish practices, but it does not follow quite so clearly that "not the Jews but the Judaizing Christians are Chrysostom's primary targets" (p xlix). It depends on how one takes the word *target*. It may be used equivalently to *goal*, though a more exact synonym is *butt*, and as Chrysostom seeks to achieve his purpose by means of the most odious and unscrupulous vilification of the Jews themselves, their history and traditions, the traditional title seems both more exact and more honest.

Paul W Harkin's translation is accurate and vigorous. Infelicities like the translation of Deuteronomy 32: 15 "Israel ate and was filled and the darling grew fat and frisky" (p 8) are rare, and on the whole, the power of Chrysostom's rhetoric is successfully conveyed. The text is abundantly supplied with footnotes, which are often helpful. The introduction has useful comments on the background of the sermons and on the question of the dates on which they were preached.

Harkins remarks that "the treatment of the Jews in the Greek Christian writers of the first three centuries has been discussed often and adequately" (p xxxiii). Christi-

anity began as a Jewish heresy: it claimed the Jewish scriptures as its own; claimed that its interpretation of them was right, and the Jewish interpretation wrong. Polemic between offshoot and parent stock was as inevitable here as it was to be during the Reformation, though the vituperations exchanged amongst Christians in the Sixteenth Century scarcely bear comparison with the violent inhumanity of the remarks of John Chrysostom against the Jews. If debate between Christians and Jews was unavoidable, it did not need to be conducted with the scurrilous frenzy which Chrysostom brought to it. It is significant that when Christians themselves were a despised and persecuted minority, they were capable of a more temperate approach. Justin Martyr conducts his debate with Trypho with at least some show of civility, and is happy to communicate with Judaizing Christians, provided they do not insist that observance of Jewish institutions is necessary for salvation. However, Justin knew of some Christians who would have nothing to do with "Judaizers", and it has to be admitted that this other tradition, to which Chrysostom belongs, has too long been dominant.

Harkins is forthright in his condemnation of Chrysostom's remarks as inexcusable (p x), and correct to seek an explanation of "this opposition and hostility" (p xxxiv), but the distinction between explanation and excuse is not always clearly maintained. Thus "there is no question but that he speaks with extreme harshness against the Jews . . . but when he condemns them, it is usually out of the mouths of their own prophets (as was customary in the genre) . . ." (p xlix). By the principles of selectivity and distortion with which Chrysostom uses the prophets against the Jews a Jew would be entitled to argue, on the basis of the first letter to the Corinthians, that Christians are given to incest, fornication, idolatry, and so on, though when Chrysostom comes to deal with this letter he is careful to set all this in context.

Harkins remarks, somewhat blandly, "that Chrysostom could hardly have delivered the *Discourses* in their present form after Vatican II's *Declaration on the Church's Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions*" (p x). It is melancholy to reflect that nearly sixteen hundred years elapsed between the preaching of these sermons and the date when that Declaration found its tortuous way to light, that

a significant contribution towards this change of attitude was knowledge of what Jews in Europe suffered during the Second World War, and that what they suffered then was due, in part, to a long tradition of Christian hatred, which, if not always inspired by writings such as these, was often justified by appeal to them.

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RELIGION AND THE ONE: Philosophies East and West
by Frederick Copleston, *Search Press 1982. pp 281.*

This is the latest in a series of books which Copleston has produced in the years following his monumental *A History of Philosophy* (1947-1975), in which he has turned his attention to large-scale, *Geistesgeschichtliche* reflections on the ideas of our own and (more recently) of other cultures. The titles exemplify the scope and style: *Religion and Philosophy* (1974), *Philosophers and Philosophy* (1976), *Philosophies and Cultures* (1979). The present work represents his Gifford Lectures for 1979-80, although he tells us rather apologetically in the text that the lectures themselves differed in some respects from the book (the text of which was written before the lectures were given), and 'were perhaps a little more lively than the printed text may suggest' (p 1). He would have liked to rewrite the work, but he is in his seventies; 'It has been traditional policy to publish sets of Gifford lectures, and in somewhat advanced years it is perhaps unwise to count on retaining sufficient energy for serious literary activity' (p 2). One can hardly disagree with his contention that 'an interest in comparative philosophy, considered by itself, does not need any special justification. No sensible person would object to the attempt to broaden one's horizon and to understand different philosophical traditions' (p 16). He acknowledges the inevitable restrictions on such encyclopaedic enthusiasm – particularly of course the matter of linguistic competence in original sources – but claims that 'there may be room for contributions even by those who lack the ideal qualifications for the task!' (p 17). Certainly Copleston's own contribution is not that of a dilettante: his learning is breathtaking

in its scope and constantly astonishing in its attention to detail. Much of the material, of course, is very well-trodden philosophical ground, and Copleston himself has covered much of it in print before. Reading the book is rather like spending an afternoon in an attic full of family heirlooms; one finds much that is familiar, some things that were forgotten, and occasionally lights on an inspiring treasure which sets the mind working over past facts and future possibilities.

The book opens with a curious introductory chapter written in the third person, and which, as he says, 'may read like a review by the author of his own work'. In it 'the author makes clear his agreement with Whitehead's justification of speculative philosophy as an endeavour to form a coherent system of general ideas . . . The implication seems to be that metaphysics possesses cognitive value, that it can increase our knowledge . . . On the other hand . . . He makes it clear that his confidence in the metaphysician's ability to pin down the ultimate reality in a conceptual web and to describe it is extremely limited'. He sees these two approaches as a rationalistic one exemplified by Whitehead and a mystical or mystically-inclined one exemplified by Jaspers. 'But are these two approaches or lines of thought really compatible? . . . Should not a philosopher make up his mind, one way or the other, before publishing? It is hardly a satisfactory situation if the reader is presented with two conflicting estimates of metaphysics' (pp 3-4). Within these self-defined and self-consciously ambiguous parameters he then explores those areas of Western, Indian, Chinese and Islamic thought which