

PREFACE

The twelve essays collected here were published over twenty years from 1995 to 2015. All except two were published during the first fifteen years, *pari passu* with work toward the first critical edition of Giles of Viterbo's *Commentary on the Sentences of Petrus Lombardus* or shortly after. The commentary, written according to the outlook of Plato, *ad mentem Platonis*, is the principal witness to Giles's interest in enriching the understanding of Christian doctrine by recourse to myths and mysticism, in the spirit of Renaissance syncretism. Giles expressed a vision for his era as the new Golden Age, a vision shared by many of his contemporaries, especially those at the papal court in Rome, where the new basilica of St. Peter in Bramante's neoclassical design was being completed and decorated with the sublime expressions of a cultural flourishing in the works of Michelangelo and Raphael, and Ghirlandaio, Perugino, and Botticelli in the wider city. During the same years, the study of Greek returned to Italy, with more ancient and early Christian writings coming to light in printed editions. This energy produced, for example, the revival of the works of Origen of Alexandria, whose edition from the Aldine press in 1510 was dedicated to Giles of Viterbo, then the prior general of his order of Augustinian Hermits and a leading intellectual at Rome. Most important for Giles is the spirit of a renewed Christian Platonism, especially as manifested in the *theologia poetica* under Marsilio Ficino in Florence. While each essay in the volume addresses a specific moment as Giles worked in copious detail through the various questions of scholastic construction on the essence and nature of the triune God in Christian

theology, each essay also contributes to a unifying aim, which is to show how Giles worked increasingly to engage the fruitful terrain between classical and Christian, philosophy and theology, intellect and will.

The title of the collection *Mens Platonis, cor Ecclesiae*, is intended to epitomize Giles's vision and labor during a most flourishing part of his life, especially when he was engaged in writing his Commentary on the first book of the *Libri Sententiarum* of Peter Lombard and serving as leader of his Order of Augustinian Hermits. Always first and foremost a man of the Church, Giles saw philosophy truly as her handmaid. Giles was an heir to medieval Scholasticism with its debt to Aristotle, as is evident from the way he frames the subtopics of his commentary, but the commentary he wrote bears the subtitle *ad mentem Platonis*. When considering the most appropriate title for this collection, then, one could have chosen *Mens philosophorum* or *Mens philosophiae*, broader than Plato. Yet, as Angelo Maria Vitale put it, saying "Plato" for Giles is the same as saying "philosophy and wisdom". Although the sources from which he draws are many (the Church Fathers, Greek mythology, etc.) Plato represents the tradition of *prisca theologia* as a whole and is the highest manifestation of it. Above all Plato is the criterion on which to measure the validity of propositions or doctrines (such as those of Aristotle for example). Finally, Platonism is undoubtedly the 'etiquette' that best defines Giles's thought.

I am grateful to the creative encouragement of Angelo Maria Vitale, who offered me the invitation to join the series «Traditio Augustiniana». It is an honor to have the present collection follow the Italian translation of John O'Malley's *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform*, and Professor Vitale's *Da Egidio da Viterbo a Enrico Noris. Figure e temi della tradizione agostiniano-eremitana tra Cinque e Seicento*. The Department of Classics in Baylor University and Archivio Storico della Provincia Italiana degli Agostiniani have co-sponsored the publication of this volume, for

which I express sincere thanks. I am grateful also to the original publishers of the articles for their permission to re-issue them.