PROCLUS: ALCIBIADES I
A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

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by

WILLIAM O'NEILL M.A.Ph.D.

University of Southern California

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PREFACE

This translation and commentary is based on the Critical Text and Indices of Proclus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato, Amsterdam 1954, by L. G. Westerink. Index II has been of great help in the translation, and the commentary is much indebted to the critical apparatus. Dr. Westerink has also been kind enough to forward his views on the relatively few problems which the Greek text has presented.

A further debt is owed to the review of Dr. Westerink's text by Prof. E. R. Dodds in GNOMON 1955 p. 164-7, chiefly for some references and some emendations to the Greek text. W. R. M. Lamb's Loeb translation of Alcibiades I has helped considerably in construing the lemmata, which Signor Antonio Carlini has found to have been inserted by a later hand from a Plato MSS. of the W family. Evidence for this is their discrepancy with the text as read in the main body of the commentary (cf. Studi Classici e Orientali, vol. x, Pisa 1961).

On the personal side, the whole work has received the benefit of constant advice from Prof. A. H. Armstrong. It was he who first suggested the undertaking, and he has been kind enough to read through the translation and commentary, making many corrections and helpful suggestions. In particular I owe him the parallels with Plotinus and thanks for a Socratic patience in my more obtuse moments. To Prof. E. R. Dodds I am grateful for many corrections in the translation and some suggestions in the notes. The many remaining defects must be laid at my own door.

WILLIAM O'NEILL
University of Southern California,
February 1964

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this work has been to present a fairly readable and reasonably accurate translation of Proclus' Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato, together with an adequate commentary that will prove intelligible to English readers. The Alcibiades was regarded by the Platonic School as the dialogue which served as the most fitting introduction to Plato's thought, and was therefore the subject of several commentaries. However Proclus does not confine himself to the text: rather he makes it the basis for a brief but comprehensive survey of later Neoplatonism that serves as a suitable introduction to the subject.

Background references to Neoplatonic Theology have been drawn mainly from the edition of the *Elements of Theology* by Prof. E. R. Dodds, and not from the *Platonic Theology*. The latter work presents a highly complicated theological scheme, available only in the text of Aemilius Portus 1618 (although a text, translation and commentary of Book II has been prepared by H. D. Saffrey, who is working in conjunction with L. G. Westerink on a complete text of the *Platonic Theology*); whereas the former gives a concise exposition together with a very helpful translation and commentary. In addition frequent reference has been made to the commentaries on the *Timaeus*, *Republic* and *Cratylus*, in the Teubner editions, and some use has been made of the commentaries on Aristotle by Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Proclus is always concerned with harmonising his Neoplatonism with what he regarded as two sources of divine revelation – the Chaldaean Oracles and the teachings of the Orphics. In addition to the references to Kroll: *Oracula Chaldaica*, special use has been made of Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy by Hans Lewy; and for the Orphics, Orpheus and Greek Religion by W. K. C. Guthrie has been utilised to supplement Kern: *Orphicorum Fragmenta*.

Questions of Logic are often raised throughout the commentary, and in his analyses of them Proclus reveals himself as a faithful follower of Aristotle, whose works are often quoted almost verbatim. There is also a fondness for parallels from ancient medicine and rites of initiation.

From a study of this commentary Proclus emerges as perhaps a somewhat more readable author than has generally been allowed: perhaps too as a somewhat more original thinker than his critics have considered, although his debt to Iamblichus and Syrianus is hard to assess. On several occasions he is at variance with Plotinus, and does not hesitate to depart from his interpretations. Certainly the differences between early and later Neoplatonism are well illustrated, as also the fallacy of regarding the school started by Plotinus as merely descending progressively with each of his followers into more and more over-elaboration and arid commentary.

Finally it is hoped that this translation and commentary may prove some inducement to those beginners wishing to acquaint themselves with later Neoplatonism in a form more narrative than that of the *Elements of Theology* and less involved than that of the *Platonic Theology*.

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