and New Comedy, and sets Menander in his historical background. Among the less conventional suggestions are the linking of Menander with Epicurus and the relating of the transience-of-material-wealth moral of *Dyskolos* to the expansion of trade after Alexander's conquests. The introduction gives few pointers to the literary appreciation of the play apart from a bald reference to 'the tightness of the play's construction [and] the subtlety of Menander's characterization'. The notes are helpful as far as they go: they are very much on the scale of those in the Loeb edition and are confined to the explanation of factual points. In short, the great merit of the book is that it provides an accurate translation of an up-to-date text. In this respect it will be valuable for students of comedy in translation and more than a useful stop-gap before the arrival of the new Penguin.

J.A. Barsby


Those who have used and inevitably benefited from the first volume of Professor Clarke's study of Cyprian will have waited eagerly for these two sequels, and will be equally impatient to see the enterprise completed (in a fourth volume coming soon). As the author notes, his text was complete by 1979, and delay has been no fault of his. I call this a 'study of Cyprian', for there is much more than a translated series of texts. These volumes follow the format of the first. Each has a succinct but soundly argued introduction, illustrating the major preoccupations and difficulties of the letters it contains—for example, masterly scepticism in Volume iii about the 'persecution' under the emperor Gallus. There is also a very necessary chronology, recommending the order in which these notoriously ill-numbered letters should be read. Then follows the English translation, and finally the immense body of notes: over 200 pages in Volume ii, 180 in Volume iii. Here lies the true breadth and value of Professor Clarke's work: full reference to Cyprian's life and other writings, reflections on his style and literary dependence, allusion to his ecclesiastical forebears and contemporaries, Greek as well as Latin (and Dionysius in particular), constant attention to the secular context, and exhaustive familiarity with contemporary debates on any number of issues; all achieved with economy, authority, and ease. In spite of the author's declaration that his purposes are
limited, any student of Cyprian's life will consult these volumes early and still have them at hand when the task is done.

And Cyprian is a figure of significance. To begin with, his writings fill for us a gap in our picture of third-century life. The good fortune of their survival is, for that reason alone, important. The first twenty-seven letters, concerned for the most part with persecution under Decius, tell us a great deal about the very mechanics of Roman government, as it laboriously applied itself to the tasks of enforcement. They remind us, in spite of themselves, that a relationship with Christianity, however oppressive, could never have been, at that period, a consuming preoccupation for the imperial authorities. They betray the extent to which, in a time of unrest, disease, and invasion, local community leaders could travel and communicate with relative ease, and achieve a sense of unity that spanned the Mediterranean world.

Now, as the full corpus of his letters is unfolded before us, we see Cyprian as more than a bishop in a succession of bishops (the way Eusebius might have portrayed him). The series pleads for a truly general understanding of what a bishop might have been. To that extent, quite frankly, Professor Clarke can (as he hopes) leave church historians and theologians to their task, yet still carry away the prize for knowing what bishops were really like. Cyprian was a member of a wealthy and influential class in the African province, a property-owner surrounded by his clients, many of them lay, and surprisingly at loggerheads with his administrative subordinates, most of them clergy. As far as church history goes, he represented a type with a long future.

We are forced to note, therefore, the secular parallels—indeed, analogues and models—that made the church of Carthage so very much akin, in finance and administration, to the secular state, to the apparatus of province and municipium. At the same time, we have to admit that involvement in that 'other' society, involvement in its government above all, called for a mental shift of some magnitude. Bishops committed themselves wholeheartedly to an alternative view of status, influence, responsibility, morality, even wealth; and that needs explaining. One was not born a bishop. Nor did everyone in the church appreciate the vigour with which a new pastor might repudiate the pretensions, or indeed the virtues and advantages, of his own past. Cyprian's letters quickly reveal a bevy of local opponents who might often with complete assurance claim occupation of an extensive middle ground, and majority support.

Not surprisingly, bishops clubbed together. Evidence for the African Councils, and allusions to similar collegial developments in Italy, Spain, and Gaul, are among the more precious contributions of the correspondence. An understanding of this third-century tradition, which Cyprian
incidentally represents, and which Professor Clarke fills out with much broader reference, is indispensable as a prelude to our appreciation of the 'tolerated' church patronised by Constantine and his successors.

Indeed, it is possible now to see that very little in fourth-century Christianity makes much sense as a culmination of third-century experiments. The very experience of persecution--so much the seed-bed of those giants of Christian self-definition, Tertullian and Origen--forced the church, forced those councils of bishops, to ask exactly what a church might be. In what, for example, did its 'holiness' reside--in purity, or in continuity? And its unity: did that depend on authoritative control, or on shared experience? Increasingly detailed argument, under secular pressure (from a government no less preoccupied with divine favour and civic order), gave rise, on the one hand, to painful division (schism was a constant theme in Cyprian's life) and, on the other, to institutions that safeguarded discipline, conformity, and consultation. Both features of the Christian community--fragmentation and organization--were the essential engines that drove the church towards being a society that Constantine could find at once attractive and controllable. It seems ironic that, in 248, when the empire of Philip felt itself on the threshold of a new age, a new millennium of power and fortune, so many in the church could sound the eschatological note, that all was ending. Yet in a sense the empire itself was debating, or about to debate, the nature of its own claim to world domination. The eventual heroes of renovatio, Diocletian and Constantine, had very different aims and visions from those of even Decius. To the student of a later period, it can come as a shock to recall (and this puts much of Cyprian's correspondence in a usefully wider context) that Rome was still the political centre of the empire in 250. Both Christians and their persecutors were waiting together, as it were, and had to wait some time, before the Milvian Bridge or the defeat of Licinius made clear what those debates in Carthage, about forgiveness, and communion, and bishops above all, were really in aid of.

All this Professor Clarke provokes. And he does so because, as he puts it, he lets the letters speak for themselves. He remains as faithful as possible to the cadence, the taste, even the obscurity of the Latin (still, alas, the Latin of Hartel, since Dierck's new edition was not published, though partly consulted). Yet the effect is generally one of clarity and movement. One has to be patient with the tenor of the third-century rhetor; but here is a believable and an arresting voice from the past. The notes always rescue us from difficulty, and allow us to enjoy into the bargain a humour and a wisdom characteristic of the best of rhetors in our own age.