"... fecit ipsum masculofeminam": Marius Victorinus, the ancient Latin Bible, and hermaphrodites

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Adam (before the creation of Eve). London, BL Add MS 10546, fol. 5v (detail); source http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_10546_f005v. Public domain.

Christian theologians, often followings St Augustine, time and again stressed that Adam was not hermaphrodite, and that this was already evident from the plural form in the biblical "male and female He created them" (Gen. 1, 27; emphasis added). While the position thus attacked was indeed sometimes held (something I myself doubted when I first read the long string of refutations - several heresies only exist in the form of their refutation), the biblical text seemed unproblematic. No-one really seems to quote the Bible as saying "He made him male and female", as St Augustine in his De trinitate seemed to quote it (De trinitate XII, 8; see the Schaff translation at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130112.htm).

However, Serge Cazelais pointed out a variant of the biblical text overlooked by previous research on the early Latin Bible (Cazelais 2007). It is found in the first books of Adversus Arium by Marius Victorinus (d. after 363). Indeed, the passage in question is worth looking at in the context of this blog. Gaius Marius Victorinus (sometimes also dubbed Afer) lived in the 4th century and wrote a large number of works on grammar, philosophy and, after his conversion to Christianity in 355, theology. Adversus Arium is, as the title indicated, an anti-Arian work in four volumes, the first of which dals with the trinity. St Jerome rather grimly writes that this book was "very obscure" (De vir. ill., c. 101; see here for the Schaff translation), and I have to say I find it difficult too.
Anyhow, let us look at the passage Cazelais (and, in passing, Baltes 2002, 111 n. 577) pointed out for containing an unusual version of Gen. 1, 27, namely *Adversus Arium* I, 64 (CSEL 83/1, 166-167):

> Si autem et istud dicit: *fecit ipsum masculofeminam* et praedictum est: *fecit hominem iuxta imaginem Dei*, manifestum, quoniam et iuxta corpus et carnem valde mystice τοῦ λόγου et mare et femina existente.

Which I roughly translate as:

> Yet if [Scripture] also says: *He made him male-female* [Gen. 1, 27], and already before it was said: *He made man according to the image of God* [Gen. 1, 26], it is evident that also according to the body and the flesh, extremely mystically, he made him according to the image of God, the λόγος being himself both male and female.

So the idea of the hermaphrodite Adam here is linked to God, or more precisely the λόγος, being "both male and female"; while it is clear that this only refers to the human being before the creation of Eve (adam before becoming Adam, so to speak), it is striking to see that humankind here is said to have been created in the image of God with respect to their bodies - later Latin tradition would firmly insist that only the soul was made "in the image and likeness" of God, not the body. For example, the Ordinary Gloss to Gen. 1, 27 (as Leah reminded us in her recent post) insisted that Adam was not hermaphrodite - and also that only the human soul was made "in the likeness" of God. Yet mind you, I am a medievalist - my astonishment may simply reveal my ignorance of early Christian theology.

**Primary source**


**Secondary literature**


https://www.academia.edu/726019/La_masculof%C3%A9minit%C3%A9_dAdam_Quelques_t%C3%A9moins_textuels_et_ex%C3%A9g%C3%A8ses_chr%C3%A9tiennes_anciennes_de_Gen_1_27