

importantly and explicitly in Francis de Sales. No wonder that in her introduction Miles has to admit that 'it is the moment of appropriation that we evade', and add that 'the activity of continuous reappropriation is what it means to participate in tradition'. Exactly. No change, no insight. This lamentable blind spot certainly has a profound effect on her evaluation not only of the books she is studying, but even of her own earlier work.

The little she has to say on asceticism in the present volume would have benefited enormously by her taking seriously and really appropriating Francis de Sales saying boldly near the beginning of the *Introduction*, as he consistently did in almost every one of his perceptive letters, that to take models of Christian living inappropriate to one's case generally turns out, among other things, to be 'ridiculous'. If, as she now thinks (p. 104), the asceticism she quite interestingly studied in her *Fullness of life, historical foundations for a new asceticism* of 1981 'cannot rehabilitate Christianity in the eyes of secular people', she was perhaps aiming at the wrong audience and might have tried a different and more persuasive method with her fellow Christians. The words of Palamas, quoted but unused at the top of p. 147 of the new book, would seem like no bad star to have followed for a creative adventure. When the present reviewer roughly thirty years ago first lectured positively on the Christian concept of the body in a course of ascetic theology there was a small stir. But the larger work is still to be done for many puzzled Christians, partly by historians who do not lose their nerve and, while acknowledging the threat of atomic extinction which haunts this new book, are not less troubled by the awareness that—not far from the classrooms—hundreds of people on the streets of Boston and other great American cities are dying of AIDS and other incurable diseases and would not be impressed by the professor's repeated conviction that misery, disease and death are more remote than they were in medieval times. Someone who is worried about 'the usefulness of prayer for contemporary Christians' might have pondered more deeply the intimate connection between authentic prayer and the development and maintenance of that genuine compassion without which there is not much to be hoped for except the discovery of the secret of how to 'fix' everything.

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GREEK APOLOGISTS OF THE SECOND CENTURY by Robert M. Grant. *SCM Press*. 1988. Pp. 254. £10.50.

There is no doubt that a general book on the apologists of the second century is much needed: in fact, it transpires from Grant's bibliography (one of the most valuable features of this book) that there has been no general work on the apologists for many years, and never one in English. It is also very important to treat the apologists in their historical context. The very word 'apologist' with its associations in English of 'apology'—'apologetics' in the sense of softening unpopular aspects of Christian belief to make it more acceptable to modern man—is very misleading when applied to the second-century apologists. The Greek word *apologia* means 'defence', and the apologists' first aim was not to produce a version of Christianity that might appeal to the Greek philosophical mind, but to defend Christians against the threat of persecution that hung over them throughout the

second century. One of the best things about Grant's book is its attempt to relate the apologists to the world of the Roman Empire. This is done both by relating the principal features of second-century Roman history—something largely unknown to modern theological students—and by relating the individual apologists to what can be discovered, often by the results of archaeology, about the different places—Rome, Athens, Antioch, Hierapolis, etc.—that they came from. The well-chosen illustrations will also help the reader to see the apologists as men of a particular place and time rather than the source of ideas contained in various treatises. Grant also draws on his extensive knowledge of late classical literature to show where the apologists drew many of their ideas from—from historians, poets, writers of sex manuals, as well as the more familiar philosophers. All this makes for a very lively book. Its presentation—in short sections (of usually less than a page long) each with its separate heading—should make it more accessible to students whose span of attention seems to be steadily diminishing.

But this book has its limitations, too, all largely a function of the book's very real strengths. The presentation through 'bite-sized' chunks of information tends to mean that it *is* largely concerned with information and rarely takes a deep enough breath to consider what all this information means ('Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?'). There is, for instance, not much consideration of the meaning of the various uses to which *logos* is put in Justin's thought. The desire to rescue the apologists from the historical vacuum in which patristic textbooks tend to leave them sometimes leads to catalogues of information on whom they might (or might not) have read. To begin with, one turns the page expecting to read what Grant thinks it all adds up to, but quickly learns that Grant has no intention of telling us. But the biggest drawback of the book—something that, at times, is positively misleading—is that Grant often seems to forget how *little* we know about this period. We certainly do not know enough to be confident about how it all fits together. But Grant makes it all fit together perfectly. All the apologies are dated and given a precise place in the Roman history of the second century. Sometimes this is plausible: it is quite likely that the apologies of Apollinaris, Melito and Athenagoras were addressed to Marcus Aurelius during his visit to Asia Minor and Greece in the 170's. But we do not know that Marcion's theology was provoked by the defeat of the Jews in the second Jewish War, nor that Justin's apology was inspired by the martyrdom of Polycarp at Smyrna (the fact that Polycarp was burned and that Justin mentions hell-fire is hardly very significant), nor is there any real evidence that Tatian's vitriolic *Ad Graecos* was a reaction to the fate of the Gallican martyrs. Grant makes the Mediterranean world seem much smaller than it was in the second century: communications were poor, many parts of that world must have known little about what was going on elsewhere. Grant also gives the impression that the question of persecution of the Christians was a matter of the attitude of the individual Emperors, seeing in particular a marked worsening under Marcus Aurelius. But it is generally accepted that persecution until the Decian persecution in the middle of the third century was a matter for provincial governors, who had considerable freedom of action. Imperial rescripts were responses to questions from such governors. To say that Polycarp was sought out

contrary to Trajan's rescript is to say something that had no meaning in Roman Law. It is odd that Grant, who has warned so often about the misconceptions in Eusebius' *Church History*, should in this book have slipped back into just such a Eusebian misconception: that there was imperial persecution that depended on the Emperor's attitude to Christianity.

ANDREW LOUTH

**ANSELM, by G.R. Evans (Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series)
Geoffrey Chapman, 1989; pp. xiii + 108. £12.95 (h/b). £4.95 (p/b)**

This volume contributes in a most well-documented way to a series which promises to be of the highest order. There is no dispute about the greatness of St. Anselm, whose lifespan straddles the time of the Norman Conquest. He is here introduced without any subsumption of that greatness under facile and abstract historical categories, but rather by reference to the concrete evidence of his own writings and those of his contemporaries. Thus Eadmer's *Life* and Anselm's letters form the main basis for the review of his life and the world. His prayers and meditations show the nature and depths of his spirituality. Here, and throughout this volume, such references are made by unobtrusive code-signs, for the use of readers who may wish to follow them up in detail.

Anselm's theological method as such is soberly outlined, with due justice being done to its remarkable overlapping with philosophy of language. Among the items skilfully introduced in a survey of the saint's *Proslogion* is the notorious 'ontological' argument for the existence of God. Here, and in the comment on his various Trinitarian reflections, the reader is well assured of the most solid of introductions without the slightest trace of obfuscatory mystification. The same lightness of touch is maintained throughout the chapters on the Incarnation (drawing upon the *Cur Deus Homo*), on the problems of evil (taking in the *De casu Diaboli*), and on Freewill (comprising *De Libertate Arbitrii*).

The whole is rounded off by a chapter on Anselm's approach to the salvific operation of the sacraments, including controversy on infant baptism, penance, and the Eucharist. His perhaps over-intellectualist limitations in the whole continuum of human possibilities in the field of theological discussion are crisply outlined at the end, along with a reasoned characterisation of his special and unique genius. Both the beginner and the established scholar cannot but benefit from this excellent set of economically-expressed reminders.

Altogether it is most refreshing to enjoy the work of an author who does not overload the main text with heavy footnotes. Indeed, there are none at all, and the end-of-chapter notes are exceedingly brief and to the point. It is perhaps in keeping with this spirit of stripped-down clarity and economy that references to Dr Evans' own works on Anselm and his time, even in the general bibliography, are quite minimal. Fortunately this modesty is somewhat remedied by the bibliography supplied editorially on the rear cover.

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