

our Lord's enemies, the 'false witnesses', gave various garbled, and so contradictory, versions of what he had really said. Dr Brandon goes on to say 'this fact raises a problem of peculiar seriousness'—a non-cogent inference being by now raised to the dignity of a fact.

For reasons of this sort we cannot accept many of the conclusions. Yet despite these limitations, an immense amount can be learned from this study, which has the merit of going over a great deal of old evidence in a refreshingly new way. There are good indices and a bibliography.

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EARLY MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY. By George Bosworth Burch. (Kings Crown Press: Geoffrey Cumberlege; 14s. 6d.)

There is at present within the Church an understandable deepening of interest in that period of thought which lies between the great patristic centuries and the formulations of the schoolmen. Not only, for the theological student, does it throw a light on the work of St Thomas which his text-books would scarcely have led him to anticipate, but in its own right it has the special instructiveness of a period of assimilation and adaptation. In an age which suffers from a surfeit of books, it is with a certain envy that one looks back to the strict economy that forced Erigena to labour at his own translations of the works which inspired his speculations, and a not unimportant reflection on almost any of the five figures of whom Professor Burch writes, is how much they gained in both freshness and concentration from the narrowness of their confines. None of them was ever very far from the gear and tackle.

It must be said at once that what is good about the present volume is that it endeavours to give, in concise and unargumentative summary, something of what five medieval thinkers *said*. The harassed examination candidate in search of a little to say on each may breathe a sigh of relief. But inevitably Abelard, to whose memory the book is dedicated and for whose theory of knowledge the author barely conceals his partiality, benefits most from the method adopted. He anticipates to an extraordinary extent much that was to come later in Descartes and even in Locke and Berkeley, and these latter thinkers are still the ordinary man's true philosophical background. The unique Anselm, on the other hand, and especially the Cistercians, Bernard, and Isaac of Stella, necessarily suffer from lack of proper perspective. That Professor Burch could permit himself the anachronism of the statement that 'Anselm, a good Catholic, was dismayed to find that the English Church, of which he had become primate, did not acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope', is only a casual illustration of the fact that we are not to look here for any strong sense of history. Similarly the short passages from St Thomas to Hegel on Anselm's argument, while

the references are useful, contribute nothing to the understanding of Anselm and still less to that of his commentators. In brief, the philosopher will, it is believed, be appalled at the naïve facility with which words in any century or context are treated as tickets for ideas. And what theologian could agree that 'the history of medieval philosophy is the history of the failure and gradual abandonment of faith's search for understanding'?

Professor Burch would probably have done his students a lowlier and more exacting service had he devoted much greater space and time to a really sympathetic investigation of the world in which any one of his choice of thinkers worked, and left his excellent bibliography to do the rest. After all, access to the pages of Migne and the blessing of good eyesight may suffice to enable a student to compile a reliable body of facts, but something more is needed in the assessment of their value, and this is the province of the teacher. In the realm of philosophy, to tell only what a man has said is often to tell everything and practically nothing.

ST AUGUSTINE'S COMMENTARY ON THE LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT, with 17 related sermons. Translated by Denis J. Kavanagh. (Fathers of the Church, Inc., New York; n.p.)

The two series of patristic translations now appearing in America have an interest quite apart from any service they may do the student. In those prepared for a discipline so alien to modern habits, they may make available to a public without Latin, matter for that traditional *lectio divina* which even in the cloister has been so largely lost to us. Probably the present volume is meant to serve some such wide purpose, for it cannot be said that it meets the needs of serious study, though the fact that the relevant passages from the *Retractiones* are printed in full in an appendix is a strong point in its favour. It is therefore a pity that the translation, while not inaccurate at least in those passages which have been compared with the Latin, is really rather pedestrian, and the effort at a biblical dignity of style results in a somewhat injudicious use of latinisms. 'Particles of discourse' take the place of 'particles of speech.' In the seventeen selected sermons which are appended, this failure to secure a rendering at the level of the original is even more evident. The polish and the tempo are gone. The book is produced with a somewhat ornate library finish, but is not altogether free from misprints, inversions and dropped numerals. The reference to St Thomas on p. 126 should read II, II Q. 84, not 74. A.S.

MATTER, MAN AND MIRACLE. By Henry P. Newsholme. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

Dr Newsholme introduces his book as an exercise in 'depoliarisation',