

py that the Third World populations, 'despite their geographical and even sociological proximity', have held themselves apart from merely christocentric notions, (p 208). In his final chapter he looks forward to a Church which shall have recovered equilibrium: 'It will emerge from its present crisis, and soon the hyper-christocentric adventures of this twentieth century will just seem like a bad dream' (p 233).

All may yet be as well as the Abbé expects. Or it may not. Or not for some time. There are many to preach salvation by the rebel Christ. Not so many to declare the grace of our creative Father. And certainly far too few of a generous enough spirit to make known the truth at both poles of belief. But if Christ sets us free, it is that we may enjoy the freedom of the Sons of God.

HAMISH F G SWANSTON

EARLY ARIANISM: A VIEW OF SALVATION by Robert C Gregg and Dennis E Groh. SCM Press, London, 1981. pp 209 £12.50.

The Emperor Constantine had a confident grasp of the origins of the Arian controversy. The Bishop of Alexandria had put to his clergy "something connected with an unprofitable question" and Arius had "inconsiderately insisted on what ought never to have been conceived at all, or if conceived, should have been buried in profound silence". Many casual students of the early history of the church must have found themselves thinking that the Emperor had a point. Most scholarly discussion of the crisis, while not endorsing the Emperor's view that the matter was "intrinsically trifling and of little moment", has seen it as a dispute between philosophers and theologians about the immanent nature of God, and has been unable to explain satisfactorily how a debate so far removed from the interests and comprehension of most Christians could have caused such bitter, widespread, and enduring dissensions within the church.

The authors of the book under review propose a re-interpretation of early Arianism in which the stake is seen to be very much higher than has been thought hitherto. For them, the origins of the crisis lie not in "an ecclesiastical version of the tussle within the metaphysics of late Platonism", or in "clashing halves of Origen's crumbling theological synthesis", or even in "competing exegetical traditions and methods" (p 79). At issue are two opposed views of salvation.

To be sure, these opposed views of salvation rest on opposing philosophical presuppositions, and these did become the battleground over which much of the fight was conducted. But Professors Gregg and Groh caution us against being misled by the prominence which the philosophical issues have achieved in the surviving sources of the controversy: they would not have us mistake the field of battle for the cause of war. In their view, the overriding preoccupation of Arius was not, as has so often been maintained, to safeguard the transcendence and unchangeability of God by reducing the Son to the status of a creature, but to assert the creaturely status of the Son in order to safeguard the possibility of salvation. The crux of the Arians' dispute with Alexandrian orthodoxy is the meaning to be given to Jesus' title "Son of God". For Alexandrian orthodoxy, influenced by an essentialist metaphysics, Jesus must be the Son of God "by nature". Changeable, and therefore corruptible human nature could not be saved in any other way than by having incorruptibility bestowed upon it by a Son of God who is "by nature" unchangeable, and therefore fully divine. For the early Arians, influenced by a voluntarist, transactional ethics, being a Son of God means winning God's favour by steady advance through free moral choice towards a state of achieved unchangeability in obedience to his will.

There is no other way, certainly no “natural” way, of being a son of God. That is why the creaturely status of the Son is so important. One can only be a son of God by conforming one’s will to God’s: by obedience to him. For this one needs a will that is free, that is capable of change either to good or evil, and only a created will is capable of change.

The implications of this view are considerable. Whereas the orthodox Alexandrians see salvation in terms of the natural Son of God conferring adopted sonship on believers, for the Arians there is no difference in kind between the sonship which Jesus wins by his free obedience and the sonship which any believer may win by imitating him in his free obedience. If the Word is entitled to be called Son proleptically, before the incarnation and before he has earned the title through his obedience, this is because God has foreseen his merit: has created him “precisely because he was of a kind to be obedient and so become a son” (p 29). In this view the status of the Word before the incarnation loses the prominence it usually has in discussions of Arianism, and attention focuses on the career of the earthly Jesus. For it is not until this career is ended, until Jesus has shown himself steadfast in obedience, that he properly becomes the Son of God.

This redirection of emphasis has its effect on the arrangement of material in this book. The first chapter discusses the Arian Christ, the second the idea of sonship which underlies it (“The Son: One of Many Brothers”), and only in the third chapter do the authors turn to the discussion of “The Obedient Logos”. Most of the central thesis is contained in these first three chapters. The argument is advanced with precision, clarity and enthusiasm. It is sometimes cogent; generally persuasive.

In the fourth chapter, described in the preface as a “test case in the battle between competing soteriologies for the allegiance of fourth century Christians”, the authors argue that the Athanasian *Life of Antony* is an attempt to win the monks to orthodoxy, not just in a general sense, but specifically to win them to the Athanasian

view of salvation, and away from the Arian soteriology which they may be supposed to have found particularly attractive. In this chapter there is a good deal of supposition, and although it is all quite plausible, it does not quite justify the confidence with which the claim is advanced. However, this chapter is only illustrative and not demonstrative of the principal argument of the book. In the final chapter Arian and orthodox views of salvation are discussed and contrasted.

My only reservation about this book, and I hope it is not merely pedantic, concerns the propriety of the word “salvation” to describe the religious preoccupation which the authors see behind the Arian christology “Salvation” and “the saviour” occur throughout the book, and although both are very frequent in Athanasius’ writings, their absence from early Arian sources is striking, even when one takes account of the paucity of these sources, and the process of biased selection by which they have come down to us. In point of fact, if the authors’ interpretation of early Arianism is correct, it is difficult to give much value to the word when applied to Jesus. For in the Arian view as they present it, Jesus really saves only himself. Even if “God’s advance of the Son to himself by adoption contains in itself the promise of the adoption of others” (p 65), all other Christians really save themselves by following the pattern of obedience set by Christ. The authors use the phrase “salvation through imitation” (p 57), but if Jesus is only a model for the obedience of sons of God then his obedience cannot be said to have merited our salvation. We must merit this ourselves, by an obedience modelled on his. Paradoxically, this makes his earthly career less essential to believers than his instrumental role as obedient Logos in the creation. If what Jesus achieved all believers can achieve, it is difficult to appreciate the “indispensability” of the Son (p 81).

It would be quite different, of course, if in this view salvation were, as it is for Athanasius, salvation from sin or corrup-

tion. But sin is only mentioned insofar as its possibility is a necessary postulate for the moral advance towards adopted sonship. The Son did not become incarnate to free us from a radical incapacity to be obedient or to be sons, but merely to provide us with a model of obedience of which we are ourselves capable. Indeed, the whole scheme bears a considerable resemblance to Irenaeus' notion of the condition and destiny of man before the actual advent of sin. Thus while the religious concern of the Arians as set forth in this book occupies the same space as "salvation" in Athanasius' outlook, and is indeed in direct conflict with it, it is not in the strict sense of the word a "view of salvation".

It is much more a religious anthropology. Seen in this light the contrast between it and Athanasian soteriology is brought into even sharper relief.

No student of the Arian crisis will be able to ignore this provocative book. It provides an exciting new perspective in the light of which the evidence will need to be sifted and tested afresh. It should also find favour as the liveliest introduction to Arianism available.

The arrangement of references to Scriptural and Patristic citations in the Index of Subjects and Modern Authors is clumsy, and too compressed to be of much use.

DENIS MINNS O P

LE COMMENTAIRE D'ODON DE CANTERBURY SUR LES LIVRES DES ROIS, edited by Charles de Clercq. *Centre de Recherches Historiques, Ventimiglia*. 1980. pp 190. No price given.

EXPOSÉS ASCÉTIQUES LATIN DU XII^e SIECLE, edited by Charles de Clercq. *Centre de Recherches Historiques, Ventimiglia*, 1979. pp 78. No price given.

Odo of Canterbury, who died in 1200 as abbot of Battle, was described by David Knowles as "one of the most attractive" figures "that appear in the literature of the time". Unlike his better known contemporary, abbot Samson of Bury, he was a spiritual leader and teacher, rather than an administrator. The *Chronicle of Battle* gives us a picture of a learned and devout man, faithful to the common life, eloquent in French and English, as well as Latin, a competent and approachable superior. Although, for some mysterious reason, he was accused of being implicated in the murder of St Thomas Becket, his name was proposed twice as a possible archbishop of Canterbury. In his own time, he was one of the eminent monastic figures in the English church.

There has been considerable unclarity about his writings, so an edition of his meditations on the Books of Kings is opportune ("meditations" seems a more apt description than de Clercq's "Commentaire" or the MS's "tractatus"). De Clercq provides good reasons for accepting its authenticity. In view of Odo's reputed good qualities as a leader, it is particularly interesting in this text to find him reflect-

ing precisely on the responsibilities of and the qualities required in a *prelatus*.

However, it is not difficult to see why this work is not well known. It is a rambling meditation on texts from the Books of Kings, heavily dependent on alleged etymologies of Hebrew names. As de Clercq points out, it is disappointingly reticent about monastic life in the period, and it does not shed much new light on 12th century spirituality or exegesis. Following the usual pattern, it makes no attempt to clarify the literal meaning of the text, confining itself to more or less arbitrary allegorical and moral interpretation. In one passage Odo explains the procedure he is following, but his explanation adds little that we did not know already.

It is interesting to find him worrying about whether all those who hold office in the church and in monastic life as *praelati* are truly appointed by God – an anxiety that is, perhaps, the obverse of the somewhat Donatist claim being put forward in the same period by the advocates of the controversial view that monks were particularly suitable for pastoral office, more so than secular clergy, because of their ascetic qualifications.