

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.

The other volume from Ventimiglia, *Exposés Ascétiques*, contains two previously unpublished 12th century texts. The first is a moralising, allegorical meditation on the "seven signs" given by Samuel to Saul, when he was looking for the lost asses. The second is a collection of bits and pieces, headed by one which is ascribed to Hugh of Fouillooy; it is not clear whether the other pieces are also meant to be by him. Both are fairly commonplace monastic texts.

In addition to providing the Latin texts, Mgr de Clercq gives us a French translation in both volumes, and also a brief Introduction.

De Clercq, very properly, intends to give us an accurate picture of what the MSS contain. However, in both volumes, this intention is impeded by a number of misprints, which makes the reader hesitant in several places, as to whether a peculiar text is due to the MS or to the printer. Worse, de Clercq prints quite a few sentences which simply cannot be construed as they stand; his translation at such points either skirts round the difficulty, or indicates that he is supposing a quite impossible construction. It appears that he has allowed himself to be beguiled by the notoriously erratic punctuation of medieval MSS (although he makes no attempt to reproduce medieval punctuation in his edition). By changing the punctuation, it is

easy to restore good syntax and good sense.

There are other places where the text, as it stands, is quite certainly wrong, and where a simple emendation produces a palpable improvement, which in some cases amounts to absolutely certain correction. (Whether all the false readings of this kind are really in the MS, or whether some of them are due to misreading of the MS, I cannot say, not having seen the MSS for myself). In cases like this, it is surely part of the editor's job to note what the MS has, and then to indicate the correction that has to be made.

In other places, the text is certainly wrong, but it is not clear what the right reading ought to be. The French translation at such points usually cheats, by resorting to omissions, paraphrase, or impossible syntax or interpretation of words. Again, it is surely part of the editor's job, however conservative he wants his edition to be, to indicate and attempt to clarify difficulties in the text he is editing.

These failures on the part of the printer and editor mean that, though we can be grateful to Mgr de Clercq for making these texts available to us, we cannot help but wish that he had made them available in a more satisfactory form.

SIMON TUGWELL O P

THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY by Eric Osborn *Cambridge University Press*, 1981. pp xiv + 321 £24.00

Professor Osborn lays great stress on the importance of the method by which a study of early Christian thought is conducted. Drawing on an article of John Passmore on the history of philosophy, he distinguishes five approaches: the polemical (which ignores the historical context and asks simply 'Is it true?'), the cultural (which understands the past exclusively in terms of its cultural setting), the doxographical (which is only interested in sources and finding parallels in earlier writers), the retrospective (which is interested in past ideas only as the precursors of some

later normative position) and the problematic (which seeks to elucidate the problems the ancient writer was trying to solve and the arguments he employs). This typology can be helpful in drawing attention to one-sided treatments, but there is danger in setting the different approaches too sharply in contrast to one another. And this is the trap into which Osborn appears to have fallen.

He uses his typology both negatively and positively. Since no serious discussion of early Christian philosophy can ignore what Osborn calls cultural or doxograph-