Gruen's book is clearly written and furnishes its reader with much information. Some will think that on occasion he takes a too majoritarian view of texts in arguing his case, so that those texts which could be thought to bear the hallmarks of what he terms a definition based upon ancestry and genealogy, and so on 'innate and irreversible traits', are to some extent outvoted; on other occasions some will think that he is too quick to allow a rather tendentiously contextual interpretation to smother a more 'ethnic' reading of a particular text (in this regard one should note his discussion of some of Cicero's more rebarbative remarks about various 'ethnic' groups, dispensed with as 'racial' on the grounds of their presence in impassioned legal defences, his view that Tacitus' remarks against Jews in Histories 5.2–13 are ironical, as they present paradoxical statements, which both convey and undercut stereotypes, or his view that Philo's highly negative remarks about Egyptians, which pick up on more widely disseminated prejudices, because they appear especially, though not always, in texts in which he was passionately and personally engaged, 'need not have general resonance'). And in all of this one is left asking when Gruen would accept a broadly 'ethnic' view in an ancient source. Interestingly, he says nothing about the evidence that, for instance, Benjamin Isaac produces for racial stereotyping of physical features and related matters of individual groups; and tends to discount as important places where climate and related matters are said to explain individual traits in certain groups of people (see especially Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 2.2, a passage left undiscussed by Gruen): a matter which was contested, but the very fact of its contestation points to the presence of a debate of this kind. With the exception of a few footnotes, he avoids engaging with Denise Kimber Buell's monograph of 2005, entitled, *Why this new race? Ethnic reasoning in early Christianity*, where she argues that Christians 'reasoned ethnically' (and this in spite of the fact that he reviewed the book); but this may not be surprising as Gruen is not concerned with the same issues, namely an assumed universality among Christians, which transcended ethnicity, often associated with Judaism. Buell, like Gruen, accepted that there was some fluidity in the term as used in antiquity and among Christians, though she might argue that Gruen has made his case more by a narrow and contestable definition of ethnicity than by demonstrating the absence of concern about something we could call peoplehood. Indeed, because Gruen does not see 'cultural' slurs, whether to do with religious or social practices as 'ethnic', one is perhaps less surprised with his conclusion than one might have been; and in going for a narrower definition he appears to contest some standard definitions of ethnicity as we find those in Hutchinson and Smith's work *Ethnicity* (Oxford 1996), to which Gruen refers, but not at length.

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The second-century apologists. By Alvyn Pettersen. (Cascade Companions.) Pp. xx + 177. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020. $25. 978 1 7252 6535 6

JEH (72) 2021; doi:10.1017/S0022046921001238

Cascade Companions are intended to make accessible to the general reader the 'vast and complex theological inheritance' of the Christian tradition by introducing them 'to that vital storehouse of authors, documents, themes, histories, arguments,

and movements that comprise this heritage' through 'brief yet compelling volumes'. This remit is admirably fulfilled by this compact introduction to the second-century apologists.

That Christians could once have been accused of atheism, cannibalism and incest is likely to seem extraordinary to the non-specialist, but Pettersen makes it make sense, while also subtly distinguishing between the approach of the six prime authors whose work he explores: Aristides, the author of *The epistle to Diognetus*, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras and Theophilus. A list of questions at the end of each chapter invites students or reading groups to relate matters arising from the historical material to the very different present-day context, but the over-riding achievement is to be found in the way the book makes an utterly alien religious environment so understandable, thus explaining why the apologists focused on the seemingly peculiar issues they took up and how they effectively addressed them, not merely in defence of Christian faith and practice but also as a potential means of evangelism.

The six chapters serve those over-riding aims, the first providing an excellent sketch of the second-century Greco-Roman world, the empire and its cults, its social pressures and assumptions, and how being a Christian in that world could be seen as treason. The second chapter outlines turn by turn what we know about the six Greek Christian apologists and their work, while chapters iii–vi take up the four principal issues: thus, chapter iii indicates how they demonstrated that Christianity was not new and was true, whatever its critics suggested; chapter iv, headed 'Atheists? Guilty as charged', describes how Christians did admit to rejecting the all-pervasive worship of the gods of the empire and its cities, provoking social disfavour and political isolation; 'Atheists? Not guilty as charged' explores Christian theism as presented by the apologists; and chapter vi, 'Thyestean banquets and Oedipean intercourse', shows how they contested those scurrilous rumours with evidence of Christian ethics and lifestyle. A brief but significant postscript brings all these discussions together by focusing on God's creation of all as the fundamental issue.

An excellent feature of the theological discussion is the way Pettersen deals with the apophatic language of the apologists. Here is no pejorative contrast between the Greek philosophical approach to the divine and the Hebrew Scriptures. Rather the emphasis is on distinguishing the unique Creator from everything created, on God not being '"hedged in" by a finite world, as though he was "contained" by time and space' (p. 99). Indeed, Justin not only deploys 'terms reminiscent of the distinct, negative vocabulary of Middle Platonism' but also 'terms reminiscent of the Scriptures, as God, the Maker and Father of all' (p. 100). God is distinct, but not distant, alien or solitary, nor was God's 'otherness' stressed at the expense of God's 'immediacy'. The oneness of God was grounded in assumptions drawn from ancient mathematics (p. 79), yet all was made through God's Logos – the questions raised were not ducked. What is refreshing here is that the apologists are not treated simply as primitive precursors of fully developed Trinitarianism, but their context is captured, together with the theological and exegetical moves it ellicited. Pettersen's previous work on Athanasius enables him to differentiate Justin's thought from the 'theological subtleties' of the later Church Fathers. But he recognises in Justin's discussion of Proverbs viii.22ff a

linguistic shift from 'created' to 'begat' – 'this Offspring was begotten by the Father before all created things' (pp. 102–3). A key distinction was enabling some kind of plurality in the one God to be recognised.

There are a few oversights, missing observations which could perhaps have offered more clarity to the non-specialist reader. At the point under discussion, for example, the reader is not alerted to the fact that the Proverbs text shifts from 'created' to 'begat', presumably regarding them as synonyms. Meeting 'Euhemeran' on p. 36, one would have been helped by the definition which appears later on p. 88. On p. 15 we read about the difficulty of Christian converts continuing to pursue certain trades, some because they were linked with idolatry, others because Christians were committed to not killing – but we are not alerted to the fact that idolatry was also implicated in serving in the military: not to join in offering incense and sacrifice to the gods would be a mark of disloyalty to the emperor. On p. 19 Christians are distinguished from Jews who were willing to sacrifice for the emperor, but we are not reminded that sacrifice could only be offered in the Jerusalem temple and in the second century Jews would not be doing this as the temple had been destroyed in AD 70. Demons appear in places, but it is never explained that *daemon* was a word for any supernatural being, good or bad; in Christian circles *daemons* became dangerous precisely because, as false gods, they exploited those lifeless statues to get sacrifices out of their worshippers. Then, there is nothing about the powerful force of the argument from fulfilled prophecy in a culture where even the emperor consulted the Sibylline oracles before going to war. There are also a few typos and the odd error: Hadrian's rescript was not sent to Pliny (p. 12) but to another provincial governor, Gaius Minucius Fundanus.

However, for all that, rarely has the world of early Christianity been so well described for the uninitiated, or indeed the consequent emphases of the apologists whether addressing it directly or providing converts with weapons to do so, or again the missional incentives to persuade everyone to recognise the one true God, Creator of all, to whom everyone is ultimately accountable and who sees and judges even the thoughts of the heart.

BIRMINGHAM FRANCES YOUNG

Origen's references to Heracleon. By Carl Johan Berglund. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 450.) Pp. xii + 403 incl. 2 figs. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. €149. 978 3 16 159221 8

JEH (72) 2021; doi:10.1017/S0022046921000786

This impressive monograph is the revised version of a PhD dissertation defended by the author at the Faculty of Theology of Uppsala University in June 2019. It analyses all those passages in the nine extant books of Origen's unfinished commentary of John that refer in one form or another to an earlier – according to Berglund (pp. 318f) continuous – commentary on the same Gospel, written by a certain Heracleon. Berglund's aims are twofold: first, by the consistent application of well-defined and strict criteria, he wants to put the identification of authentic material from Heracleon's work on a much surer footing. And, secondly, having winnowed the original material from Origen's laudatory or critical comments,