

version still includes lucid discussions of topics such as the Trinity and grace, but it also liberates Chadwick's gifts as a narrator, with an unrivalled knowledge of the details of Augustine's experience and a gift for bringing these to life. So, for example, his retelling of the famous conversion scene in the garden makes even a disputed manuscript reading exciting for the non-specialist reader.

Augustine's pastoral role is ever-present, as Chadwick shows partly by interweaving references from letters and sermons with discussion of more theoretical texts. 'Shouldering the initially highly unwelcome responsibilities turned him into a great man such as he would never have become had he remained a professor of rhetoric.' A bishop had to engage with ordinary people's lives, 'from dukes to dustmen' (pp. 75–76). Augustine's comments repeatedly reflect such experience: he 'wisely observes that in charitable giving it is a good thing to take your wife into your confidence' (p. 60); 'Augustine tried to wean his congregation from fortune-tellers, astrologers and amulets' (p. 124); 'At Hippo Augustine had difficulty in persuading his congregation to be civil to Donatist fellow citizens' (p. 104). At the same time, Chadwick's sympathy with his subject does not prevent him from detached criticism where it is appropriate, for example of some of the positions Augustine maintained in his dispute with Julian of Eclanum.

The characteristically limpid and lively prose makes the book a delight to read, and it is prefaced with a sparkling introduction by Peter Brown. This is the perfect introduction to Augustine, enabling the general public to share with pleasure the fruits of painstaking scholarship.

MARGARET ATKINS OSA

ASCETICISM IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD by Richard Finn OP, *Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 182, £16.99 pbk, £50 hbk*

This slim volume sheds valuable new light on the already popular area of early Christian monasticism, by adding material from pre-Christian philosophical traditions as well as from the Syrian east and Asia Minor, to be read along with the better-known texts from fourth century Egypt. It is a vivid and informative new slant on an area of great contemporary interest.

Chapter one presents a detailed and carefully expounded discussion of philosophical asceticism, by giving an account of the different practices and approaches to physical discipline of Cynic, Stoic, Neo-platonic schools of thought as well as in Graeco-Roman cults. This absorbing chapter is followed by an analysis of the more familiar area of Jewish asceticism, looking behind Philo to ascetic groups in Hellenistic and later Rabbinic Judaism. The third chapter gives a longer account of Christian asceticism, carefully suggesting the influence of both pagan and Jewish thought in this area. The author rightly stresses the complex nature of early Christian asceticism but comments that this has been 'too long ill-served by accounts which unduly privilege the Egyptian monks' (p. 7); a thought-provoking point of view, in which one might take exception to the words 'ill-served' and 'unduly privilege'.

Chapter four gives an account of the ascetic theology of Origen, stressing his extensive influence on the growth of Christian asceticism in relation to personal sanctity. Chapter five looks at areas of Christian asceticism in relation to personal sanctity. It looks at areas of Christian asceticism which the author suggests were independent of Origen's influence, in Syria and North Africa and among those (previously ignored because 'unduly privileged') desert fathers, not the hermits but monks in Pachomian monasteries. The author's 'final thoughts' constitute a reflection on the influence of early Christian asceticism on the church as a whole. There is a bibliography of primary and secondary sources and an index.

This book throws an engaging new light on the transmission of ideas about the place in human life as well as in religious life of abstinence from sexual relationships, fasting from food and drink, poverty and detachment, as well as the limiting of contact with others in silence and solitude. It gives a carefully nuanced picture of the wise transmission of ideas and practices and shows how they changed in contact with different cultures and times.

BENEDICTA WARD SLG

CARDINAL NEWMAN FOR TODAY by Thomas J Norris, *Columba Press*, Dublin, 2010, pp. 230, £11.50

Fr Thomas J. Norris is Professor in Systematic Theology at the Pontifical University at Maynooth and a member of the International Theological Commission. *Cardinal Newman for Today* is an amplified reprint of his earlier *Only Life Gives Life*, and is intended to serve as an introduction for the educated general reader to the thought of John Henry Newman. With Newman's beatification a book like Norris's is certainly needed. If one were asked by an inquirer wholly unfamiliar with the Cardinal why Newman is an important and holy man the question would not be easily answered in a few words, but there is a need for something other than Newman's own writings or the various magisterial biographies to proffer as a substitute for the impossible one line answer to that question. The book takes its structure from Norris's understanding of Newman's theological epistemology passing from revelation, 'the roots' (chapters 1–3), through theology, 'the shoots' (4–6), to Christian life, 'the fruits' (7–9).

As Norris indicates at the beginning of Chapter 4, the most important object of Newman's 'courageous research', the concept of doctrinal development, has in the course of the twentieth century become the central issue of division within the Catholic theological academy. Is such development the extrapolation of the logical consequences of a fixed deposit accomplished once and for all at the death of the last apostle, and the tests of authenticity proposed by Newman exclusively diagnostic; or do such tests provide an independent warrant for a more occult process of growth in which the faith forever remains, in Norris's words, 'an unknown to be discovered'? The answer given to this question determines on which side of the great divide in the present struggle for the visible church a thinker places himself. Norris seems to concede that Newman placed himself in the doctrinal camp and yet he seems to want to put Newman on the other side of the fence.

At Norris's hands, Newman's support is constantly invoked for the theological revolutionaries of the second half of the twentieth century. Norris suggests, for example, that the Anglican Newman resembled Küng, and the Catholic Newman, Rahner, and he presents the Cardinal as the father of Vatican II, which latter Norris interprets as opposed to rather than completing Vatican I. This theme is reinforced by a vigorous defence of the hermeneutic of rupture as the key to the interpretation of the twenty-first Ecumenical Council offered rather incongruously in chapter five.

The question of the relationship between the essentially personal nature of Christian revelation and the propositional manner in which it is transmitted is of course a quite legitimate one upon which Newman may throw a good deal of light, but the fundamental theology Norris resolutely foists upon him seems to owe rather more to Friedrich Schleiermacher than to Newman himself. Newman's distaste for Liberalism is acknowledged but Norris refuses to express himself in the same terms, preferring to recast Newman's opponents as 'sceptics'. These are placed at one extreme of a spectrum through which Norris offers a *via media*. On