

**THE ASCENT OF CHRISTIAN LAW: PATRISTIC AND BYZANTINE FORMULATIONS OF A NEW CIVILIZATION.** By John A. McGuckin. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012. Pp. 279. Paper, \$24.00.

In his latest offering, Orthodox theologian and patristics scholar McGuckin addresses the question, "What did Christianity do to build a civilization?" While the focus of the book is Christian understandings of law in the patristic and Byzantine eras, McGuckin insists in the *Proemium* that it is not a book on canon law. Rather, reflections on Christian legal thought are brought to bear on more comprehensive questions about how the church transformed the ancient world and gave birth to a new form of society. Much of the material in the first half of the book (such as the surveys of Plato, Aristotle, Tertullian, and Augustine) will likely be familiar to most readers; however, once McGuckin turns eastward in the latter half of the volume, the reader is presented with some fascinating material (for example, on the later Byzantine canonical commentators such as Balsamon and Zonaras) that is not readily available outside of specialist literature. Because of this, despite McGuckin's disclaimer, the book would be a good place to start for a nonspecialist seeking a grasp of the development of Eastern Christian canon law. It would also work well as assigned reading for a survey course on early Christianity, particularly if the instructor has an interest in exposing students to Eastern Christian social thought. Those interested in McGuckin's larger questions and concerns would also do well to seek in the book some insights into how Christianity continues to inform civilization as we know it.

*John Taylor Carr*  
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**THE UNITY OF CHRIST: CONTINUITY AND CONFLICT IN PATRISTIC TRADITION.** By Christopher A. Beeley. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012. Pp. xii + 391. \$50.00.

In this book, Beeley proposes a re-telling of the development of patristic theology that diverts attention away from the development of Nicene Trinitarian theology to a unitive Christology, beginning with Origen and continuing through Maximus the Confessor. Beeley criticizes Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Hilary of Poitiers, Leo of Rome, John Damascene, and other "Antiochenes" for their strict distinction between God and creation, evidenced by scriptural exegesis which distinguished between what is spoken of in reference to Christ's humanity and divinity and a reluctance to ascribe suffering to Christ's divine nature. In their stead, Beeley presents his own cast of theological heroes: Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor. In contrast to the former group, these theologians began from the "plain sense" of scriptural witness to the single subject of Jesus Christ and revealed in the mystery of the union of God and humanity and the salvific suffering of God.

Unfortunately, practically none of the principal figures in the book fit perfectly into such distinctions, which Beeley himself readily admits. Furthermore, while Beeley consistently objects to the ontological separation between God and creation that Athanasius introduces, as well as attempts to preserve divine impassibility, it is unclear whether he desires an alternative ontology or simply the language of paradox and mystery. Nevertheless, this book excels in its deep familiarity with a vast range of patristic literature and its enviable clarity of presentation, earning it an audience from scholars and students of Christian history and theology alike.

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**THORNS IN THE FLESH: ILLNESS AND SANCTITY IN LATE ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY.** By Andrew Crislip. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. Pp. 237. \$65.00.

Crislip explores how early Christian monastics in Cappadocia and Palestine interpreted physical illness's source, cause, and treatment. He finds that writers understood the connections between personal holiness and physical illness in a surprising variety of ways. Crislip begins with Athanasius's *Life of Anthony*, a widely distributed monastic biography, where despite harsh asceticism, Anthony is depicted as being strong, fit, and well. This led to some communities holding that asceticism led to health by bringing the body under the mind's control. Yet, other writers argued that patiently remaining faithful to God in the midst of severe illness was a mark of sanctity: the holy suffered well. Yet, the book also argues that ascetics had differing ways of relating illness to asceticism. For some, illness was an ascetic practice, while for others, illness compromised their ability to be willfully ascetic and survive on minimum amounts of food and water. Some counseled tempering asceticism during times of illness, believing that asceticism could make one ill; other writers did not. Some saw illness during asceticism as a sign that one's ascetic practices were too extreme to be faithful and could perhaps be demonically inspired. While this book will primarily interest historians, pastors and chaplains will also find it useful because contemporary believers' speeches on God's role in illness can echo voices of the faithful in the past.

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**IRENÆUS: LIFE, SCRIPTURE, LEGACY.** Edited by Paul Foster and Sara Parvis. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012. Pp. xv + 274. \$39.00.

Originating in a 2007 conference hosted by the University of Edinburgh, this recent volume comprises eighteen essays which have been roughly divided into three sections: the life and historical context of Irenaeus, his engagement with Christian scripture, and the shape and reception of his

theology. Although some of the essays attempt to tackle broad themes, such as Michael Slusser's admirable attempt to identify the heart of Irenaean theology in seven pages, most confine themselves to smaller points of dispute within contemporary scholarship—including a back-and-forth dispute between Charles Hill and Sebastian Moll regarding the identity of the unnamed elder in *Adversus haereses IV*. This guarantees the volume's relevance for those conversant with current scholarship, but may make it less helpful for those seeking an introductory text to Irenaeus. As with all edited volumes, one should expect variations and points of disagreement amidst the contributors. Nevertheless, what emerges from the volume as a whole is a rather consistent portrait of the ancient bishop which is more consonant with his name than some modern interpretations have allowed. Instead of a divisive figure who seeks to impose an artificial uniformity, we find an irenic *vir ecclesiasticus*: celebrating the diverse work of the Spirit, intent on promoting peace in the church, and preeminently concerned with preserving the faith handed down to him. This volume is to be highly recommended for any interested in Irenaeus, his historical context, and his immediate and abiding influence on the shape of Christian theology.

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**HILARY OF POITIERS ON THE TRINITY: FROM DE FIDE TO DE TRINITATE.** By Carl L. Beckwith. Oxford Early Christian Studies. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. 240. \$99.00.

In this rigorous and illuminating study of Hilary of Poitiers's *De Trinitate*, Beckwith tackles the vexed problem of the chronology and structure of Hilary's classic work and provides a compelling diachronic analysis of its contents. Beckwith argues that Hilary was motivated to revise two earlier works, *de fide* and *Adversus Arianos*, in reaction to the "Blasphemy of Sirmium" in 357 and that this revision was significantly informed by his subsequent collaboration with Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousians. Beckwith parts ways with the previous consensus on the composition of *de trinitate* on several fronts. He argues that Book 1 was not part of the original *de fide* but was added as part of the revised *de trinitate* as a kind of theological *prolegomenon* under the guise of an autobiographical account of his journey of faith. He also concludes that Books 7–12 were composed intentionally as part of the new treatise and were not part of the original *Adversus Arianos*, which is now comprised of Books 4–6. Throughout his analysis, Beckwith attempts to distinguish original from revised material and thereby to identify the development of Hilary's thought. He especially focuses on two issues of theological methodology raised by Hilary in Book 1, the appropriate relation of faith and reason, and the use of Scripture. By the nature of the case, Beckwith's conjectural reconstruction does not admit of empirical certainty. It will surely be invaluable, however, to graduate students

and scholars who negotiate the complex terrain of Hilary's *de trinitate*.

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**OROSIUS AND THE RHETORIC OF HISTORY.** By Peter Van Nuffelen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. viii + 252. Cloth, \$110.00.

Van Nuffelen offers a learned and thought-provoking reappraisal of Orosius's *Historiae*, arguing that the work is best understood as a largely conventional exercise of late antique Roman history steeped in then widely recognized rhetorical conventions. The author first helpfully locates his work in the scholarly bibliography on Orosius, lamenting that the work is usually studied in comparison with Augustine or as a theology of history and rarely with attention to its own logic. Van Nuffelen then concentrates on the rhetorical features of the work to reveal that Orosius's chief concern was to destabilize the picture of Rome's glorious past enshrined in the contemporary educational curriculum. Individual chapters offer close readings of Orosius's rhetorical decisions at key moments in the text, including the use of allusions to Vergil, the deployment of exempla, an emphasis on pathos, and the inclusion of panegyric. Throughout, Van Nuffelen shows how Orosius employs established pedagogical techniques to undermine traditional educational ideology by exhibiting past miseries and the comparatively pleasant state of the present against a school curriculum stressing the glory of the Roman past. The book concludes with a brief comparison of Orosius's understanding of the history of the Church with those of Augustine and Eusebius, distinguishing the Spanish priest from both through his optimistic but hardly triumphalist view of the Church's impact on society. This book is of broad interest to students and scholars of historiography, Christianity, and late antiquity.

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**A COMPANION TO AUGUSTINE.** Edited by Mark Vessey. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Pp. vii + 595. \$199.95.

This rich volume seeks to account for the "hermeneutical shift" in the study of Augustine and "late antiquity" that has led to the "effacement" of the "disciplinary boundary markers" that previously relegated Augustinian scholarship to the domain of patristics. As Vessey observes, the works of Brown and Marrou have accounted for such a shift, carving out a niche for studies that broaden and expand the scope of research in the field of Augustinian studies. The articles found in this Blackwell *Companion* reflect movement into new intellectual territory, for while they address familiar themes such as philosophy, Scripture, language, and the Church, they also offer fruitful forays into political history, cultural geography, Roman public life, and the legacy of