

may link the two places at either end, but it does not make them the same place.

This is not just being pedantic, being prosaic in the face of poetic fancy. Bishop is insistent throughout that he is propounding a thesis, and to establish a thesis one needs a certain prosaic cogency of thought, not simply the fancies, suggestions and anecdotes in which this book abounds. There is also much sheer unsupported assertion. To take an example from the chapter on the Erotic, Bishop devotes one paragraph to homosexuality. In the space of this quite short paragraph we are asked to believe that repetition (which dominates too much of anybody's sexual experience) "is aggressively present in the content as well as the form of homosexuality"; that homosexuals "affirm [their] own partial identity over and over as if repeating a half would make it a whole by sheer force of will"; and that homophilia fails to "admit the existence of another body not entirely identical with my own, and with that relation, which seems indispensable to sanity, not to mention spirituality, in any context" (p.97). This all needs to be spelled out further if it is to be intelligible, let alone seem plausible. Yet none of it is argued for, or even explained. And that is typical of this book.

There are interesting insights scattered throughout, but they do not add up to an argument. One also has to wade through a great deal of almost impenetrable prose to find them. This is a by no means untypical example: "It is not by evading, then, or even supplementing what is knowable but by completing what is already implicit in the structure of the most typical instances that one might approach the verge at least of what would in such a case become at last an other world indeed - the world, that is, of the Other" (p.219). This book is hard work, unexpectedly so from a professor of English, and I am not sure it is worth it. This is a pity, since it deals with an important range of subjects, and clearly a great deal of work has gone into it.

GARETH MOORE OP

IRENAEUS, by Denis Minns O.P. *Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, pp. xvi + 143.

In the space of eight chapters Denis Minns traces the principle controversies that helped to shape the views of Irenaeus and his own answers to the central 'heresies' of his age - the second century AD. - He writes with moderate enthusiasm on his theme, for he admits that though there are many things to applaud in Irenaeus, his hero is on occasion misguided (or wrong) and that even when he may be correct, he hardly presents a complete picture of Christianity.

Irenaeus was in many ways a child of his age. For example, he shared with the majority of Christian (and pagan) thinkers the idea that 'nothing could be both new and true'. He also believed that philosophy was the parent of heresy. For Irenaeus, as for Eusebius and others after him, heresy was a perversion of the original truth (cf. 12). Throughout is the unstated (and unproven) assumption that 'orthodoxy' is on the side of antiquity and a revelation given by God, above all (though not exclusively) in Christ. Orthodoxy is not therefore, created but always there and clear from the beginning. It is not quite evident whether Minns follows Irenaeus in this. But his remarks in the final chapter (p. 134) seem less than completely happy about Irenaeus' robust sense of the immutability of doctrine, when he contrasts Vatican II's *Decree on Divine Revelation* (section 8) with the more static position of AH 1.10.2..

Hardly surprisingly in a work devoted to Irenaeus, we find him contrasted (usually favourably) with the discredited Augustine. Minns prefers the 'optimism and confidence' of Irenaeus, which has largely disappeared from the Western tradition' due to the influence of Augustine (cf. p. 135). There is much more to the same effect on pp. 68-71. There is, indeed, much to be said in favour of the more creation centred approach of the earlier writer. Even so, as Minns half admits, Irenaeus' account of the Fall labours under serious difficulties, above all because it has to invoke the childishness and immaturity of Adam and Eve in order to explain the fall (cf. pp 73 ff and Dem. 12 AH 4.38.1.) But such an account would imply that our first parents were created imperfect and though there is evidence in Irenaeus to support the primal childishness of both Adam and Eve, there is also evidence to suggest their perfection (cf. p. 61). Irenaeus' uncertainty on this point makes the argument for the 'immaturity' account less plausible.

The positive attitude adopted by Irenaeus to the body, and to creation and history in general, help to distinguish him attractively from the majority of his contemporaries and immediate followers. But the suppressed Gnosticism of the period or, better, its absorption of a more Platonic approach, meant, in effect, the submergence of the Irenaeian vision. This does not mean that he was totally forgotten. He was quoted liberally by Eusebius and even more liberally by the arch anti-liberal, Epiphanius. Basil cites him in *de spiritu sancto* 72, and it is an attractive and plausible suggestion that Athanasius owes much to Irenaeus' positive assessment of the body and to his doctrine of divinization.. Even so, despite his orthodoxy and usefulness, the text of Irenaeus hardly survives at all, except in excerpts in the original Greek. The five volume *Adversus Haereses* is available in toto only in latin translation probably of the fourth century, while the *Demonstration of the Gospel* - a small work in only 100

paragraphs — depends solely on a thirteenth century armenian manuscript. The reticence of history is hard to account for.

But perhaps one of the strangest contradictions in Irenaeus is his insistence (on the whole) that human beings in particular and the human race in general are on the way to ever greater perfection, through change and progress, moving from 'image' to 'likeness'. Christian doctrine, above all the canon and traditions of the church admit of no change at all. (On all this compare the two points on page 61 and 119) One may only conclude that Irenaeus' apologetic intention forced him to insist against the Gnostics BOTH that the best explanation for evil lay in the immaturity of our first parents AND that the reason for Gnostic errors lay in their betrayal of primitive revelation.

It is strange, by the way, that in the section beginning on p.116 Minns devotes so little space to Irenaeus' defence of the fourfold gospel and the (at times) bizarre proofs adduced by him in order to defend a position which was to become (if it was not already) accepted by the whole church. But, all in all this is a very worthwhile book on an important author, who has, to date, no really comprehensive treatment in English. Its only defect, from the point of view of the potential reader, is its lack of an index, which would make for speedier reference.

ANTHONY MEREDITH SJ

WOMEN AND MISSIONS: PAST AND PRESENT: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PERCEPTIONS by Fiona Bowle, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener, *Providence/Oxford: Berg Press. 1993. pp.279. £14.95.*

Among the world's most overlooked and neglected women must surely be counted valiant missionaries. On that account this book is both long overdue and very welcome, primarily because it remembers and pays tribute to the contribution which many women have made to global missionary endeavour from the nineteenth century onwards. The writers, using the perceptions of anthropology and history, attempt to debunk those myths which do not go beyond the "wives" and "support workers" models. They try to do justice to the memory of those heroic women who were missionaries in their own right. The twelve persons who wrote the book (ten women and two men) deal with such issues as the need to reclaim women's presence, for clearly they have either been rendered invisible by neglect and or deliberately written out of history. The writers give us the story behind the story so that we gain some understanding of the tensions which developed when missionary women resisted attempts to make them mere adjuncts of men missionaries. The message is clear: :