

## Book Reviews

language, Chapter 15 on theories of perceiver and perceived in hearing, and Chapter 16 on expectation, modelling and assent in the history of optics. Given that so little has been written on the senses other than vision, Crombie's contribution to this subject area remains invaluable. In much the same way, his emphasis on the interaction between craft skills and academic ways of knowing (exemplified here in Chapter 7 on experimental science and the rational artist in early modern Europe) is still worth reflecting on.

However, it is questionable what benefits are to be gained from retrospective collections of this kind, which are becoming increasingly fashionable within the historical profession. In exceptional cases (such as Owsei Temkin's *Double face of Janus* (1977), for example), a collection provides easy access to articles which remain classics in their field. In Crombie's case, however, virtually everything he has to say in these articles has been superseded, most notably by his own three-volume *Styles of scientific thinking in the European tradition* (1994). The extent to which he repeated himself over the years is all too evident here. The cumulative effect of this book has been to force me to articulate why I find Crombie's vision so deeply unsatisfactory. It seems to me that he essentializes Western science to the point where all methods and techniques which now come under the broad heading of "science" have always existed in one form or another. His approach is so flexible that as new techniques appear, so their origins will be discovered in the same place as always: the West. Fundamental differences of ideology and belief are concealed under the bland term of "styles", while the role that power, authority, passion and desire play in the making of science is rendered completely invisible. With his gaze firmly fixed on his ideal men, the forces which shaped the direction and goals of such rational beings are resolutely ignored. From the perspective of a younger generation that has de-idealized science, Crombie's account of well-behaved and morally upright scientists moving always

towards the truth with unmixed rationality and integrity seems remarkably dated.

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**Darrel W Amundsen, *Medicine, society, and faith in the ancient and medieval worlds*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. xv, 391, £33.00 (0-8010-5109-2).**

This collection reprints, with slight changes, nine of Darrel Amundsen's essays on the interrelationships between Christianity and medicine in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, along with two newly composed. The result is a coherent survey of a major theme, and shows up well its author's strengths—careful reading of unfamiliar sources, a reluctance to accept easy generalizations, and a firm commitment to the unity of his own faith and scholarship. He has always been a courteous controversialist, and one can only welcome the wider accessibility of some of his more important conclusions, particularly on the early church's attitudes towards the incurably ill, those born defective, and suicides. His classic exposition of the (often misinterpreted) ecclesiastical legislation on the practice of medicine and surgery should be essential reading for those who think that the medieval church proscribed many aspects of medicine and surgery because it had a horror of blood.

The two new chapters show Professor Amundsen still in good form. The first combines autobiography with an outline of his main theses over the years, not least the general acceptance of medicine by orthodox Christianity, its imposition of a new ethic of caring—and of patient suffering, and an awareness of continuity with many aspects of ancient medical ethics. But the air of the theologian becomes at times rarefied, and one would like to have seen a response to MacMullen's claim for Christianity as a healing religion *par excellence* and for the

importance of healing miracles, whether actual or potential, as a motive for conversion. Preachers say little about this, but there are other “less orthodox” texts that may bridge the gap between the age of the gospels and that of saintly healing from 350 or so onwards. St Augustine was well aware of the gulf that might separate his own explanations and practices from those of his flock.

The final essay surveys writings on syphilis from 1495 to 1504 in order to discover any moral stance. It carefully lists the various causes suggested for the disease, and explains soberly and sensibly the relatively small part attributed to divine wrath as a remote cause of infection. It notes the acceptance, from 1500 on, of sexual intercourse as the main way in which the disease was caught, and shows that none of the physicians recommended refusing to treat syphilitics, or, indeed, attributed their illness to specifically sexual sinning. This is extremely useful, as far as it goes, and stands in sharp contrast to some recent fashionable formulations. Yet, as with many of the pieces in this volume, one can assent to their conclusions, while wishing that the author had taken the wider argument further. Comparison with Temkin’s article on the morality of syphilis in his *The double face of Janus* shows where such an argument might lead.

In his responses to the problems posed by others Darrel Amundsen, as this collection shows, generally offers a sound assessment based on a close acquaintance with the primary sources. To wish that he had struck out more often on his own, or interpreted some of his texts more imaginatively, is intended less as a criticism of what he has given us than as an acknowledgement of the value of his conclusions.

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**Marie-Luise Windemuth**, *Das Hospital als Träger der Armenfürsorge im Mittelalter*, Sudhoffs Archiv, Beiheft 36, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1995, pp. 164, illus., DM/SFR 66.00.

This book presents an institutional history of Christian almsgiving through the medium of the hospital from the early Middle Ages to the seventeenth century. It draws upon a wide range of examples from Scandinavia to Jerusalem, with especial emphasis on Germany and Switzerland. The author has relied almost exclusively on secondary sources in German; and, although her bibliography is most impressive, there are some surprising omissions, such as the survey chapters by Michel Mollat in Jean Imbert’s *Histoire des hôpitaux en France* (Toulouse, 1982), which cover much of the same ground. Dr Windemuth begins with a general discussion of measures for poor relief adopted by the Church before the ninth century. Chapters on monastic almshouses and cathedral hospitals examine attempts to deal, respectively, with the problems of urban and rural poverty. The process of “communalisation”, whereby civic authorities and private individuals came increasingly to assume responsibility for the management of hospitals, is also described, as are the arrangements made across Europe for the segregation of lepers and the work of three religious orders devoted specifically to the care of pilgrims and the sick. In her study of the Antonines, who cared for sufferers from ergotism, Dr Windemuth investigates the spiritual and physical remedies at their disposal. Although, like many writers before her, she presents evidence from Grunewald’s magnificent altarpiece (which was painted for an Antonine hospital), she does not refer to Andrée Hayum’s illuminating study, *The Isenheim altarpiece: God’s medicine and the painter’s vision* (Princeton, 1989), which adds greatly to this subject. The work of the knights of St John in the Middle East and Europe, and of the order of the Holy Ghost in Germany is considered in some detail. Here, as elsewhere, the reader may occasionally wish for rather less information about dates and places and more analysis: what proportion of its net income might a hospital spend on almsgiving? Did this change with the passage of time? And what effect did demographic, social and economic trends have on these institutions?