

14. Seven Books of History Against the Pagans by Orosius (417)

Paul Orosius was a young Spanish presbyter who visited Augustine in Africa and Jerome in Palestine. Augustine asked him to write a supplement to his City of God, then only half completed. Orosius finished his Seven Books of History in just one year. The reader he had in mind was a pagan who refused to surrender his faith in a world which was officially Xn, and who interpreted the barbarian invasions as evidence of the gods' anger at the cessation of sacrifices to them. Orosius argued that the world, whose history was one long series of calamities, was actually getting better since the coming of Christ. As the Gospel spread, it inclined men's hearts to clemency and peace.

As evidence of the one God who is the author of all things, Orosius appealed to natural understanding and to philosophy. But, he maintained, "where reason fails, faith comes to the rescue; for unless we believe, we shall not understand." The biblical teachings concerning God's creation of man, man's abuse of his freedom, and God's redemptive purpose, give the clues for understanding human history.

In his seventh book, Orosius attempts to show that rewards and punishments attach to those who favor and to those who oppose the progress of the church. Ten times the Romans persecuted the Xns (just as Pharaoh refused ten times to free Israel from slavery), and ten times the Romans were punished. Orosius further contends that those emperors since Constantine who had defended the church were rewarded, and the others were punished. Theodosius was an example of the former, and Julian the Apostate and Valens were examples of the latter.

NOTE: From this point until the High Middle Ages, not much was written of an apologetic sort.

15. Monologion (1076) and Proslogion (1078) of Anselm

Anselm was born at Aosta in northern Italy in 1033. He studied under the famous Lanfranc at the monastery of Bec in France. For 30 years he served as prior and then abbot of Bec, becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093. He died in 1109. Anselm ushered in the movement known as Scholasticism, named for its association with the monastic and cathedral schools of the 11th and 12th centuries -- such schools as Bec, Laon, Chartres and Notre Dame de Paris.

The Monologion (or Soliloquy) seeks to demonstrate the existence of God by rational proofs, using three arguments. (1) When things are compared to each other, some are better, some are worse. There must be an absolute good by which they are judged and in whose goodness they all participate. This absolute good alone is good through itself and is therefore the greatest good. That which is supremely good is also supremely great. There is, therefore, something which is the greatest and best of all things