

What is constant in these critiques is an insistence on the wedding of music to dramatic action, with a fine psychological insight (for the characters and the action), where these have been consistently developed by both librettist and composer, or unsparing strictures where this has not been the case. It is the author's scientific refusal to tolerate improbabilities that will stimulate any reader who has the habit of smiling indulgently over his synopsis and lazily settling down at the opera to let the music convey all apprehension of the drama. Sometimes I think Mr Newman is almost too severe. I do not agree that 'it is almost incredible of Da Ponte' to keep a lady like Elvira on the stage listening patiently to the insolence of I eporello, a mere lackey. Mozart's Elvira is a woman tragically in love and therefore conceivably prone to self-torture, or to a submission of this kind.

Many observations are witty, and regarding the nonsenses of operatic drama Mr Newman keeps deliciously dry, never patronising. However, he is naughty about the Austrian Archbishop Piffi and the denunciations of *Salome*; and a fundamental point is made which must be questioned. 'The outcry against *Salome*' he says, 'on the ground of its "morbidity", "perversity", "immorality" and what not came from people constitutionally unable to distinguish between art and life. The artistically minded man has no more fear as to the possible effects of this "perversity" upon the everyday life of the ordinary citizen than he has of an epidemic of lying and treachery after an evening with Iago or a rise in the domestic murder statistics after a few hours of Othello.' I cannot agree with Mr Newman's distinction between 'art' and 'life'. Of course works of art do not usually *produce* action. But what they certainly strongly affect is the *manner* of our acts. Stories and dramas, for example, will not vastly alter the number of folk who are murdering or making love, but they will affect the *fashions* in these activities. Since few people engage in the former and many in the latter, the moralist who may overlook an inspiring tale about a fascinating killer is bound to question a work accused of 'perversity' or 'morbidity' regarding sexual matters.

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ST GREGORY OF NYSSA: THE LORD'S PRAYER, THE BEATITUDES. Translated and annotated by Hilda C. Graef. (*Ancient Christian Writers* Vol. 18. Longmans; 25s.)

That St Gregory of Nyssa should be the first of the Cappadocian fathers to be represented in the *Ancient Christian Writers* series is symptomatic perhaps of the great awakening of interest in him which marks the present century. In his own lifetime, and subsequently, his fame tended to be obscured by the more immediately striking figures of his brother St Basil, and of his friend and namesake of Nazianzus.

This overshadowing undoubtedly resulted in a kind of myth of a father who, if not exactly unorthodox, yet engaged in rather unprofitable and somewhat recondite speculations.

The two works contained in the present volume should serve both to dispel this undeserved reputation and to introduce its readers to St Gregory's thought. As an administrator he may not have been a great success, but at least these homilies show that he was far from failing in the more important episcopal function of teaching. It is indeed a very attractive figure which emerges in these sermons, that of a bishop fully aware both of the everyday life which his flock lived with all its temptations against true Christian living, and of the best thought outside the Church at the time. The easy way in which these two awarenesses are here blended together, the common touch acting as a foil to argument which is always exacting, betrays a skill at least as much pastoral as literary.

It is this pastoral note which is responsible for the moral and exhortatory tone as well as the preoccupation with the literal sense which are more in evidence here than in most of Gregory's writings. But again it is precisely this fact which makes these homilies such a good introduction to him, since his great theme of the restored image of God in man is here related to the most common level of Christian life.

Altogether this is a very welcome addition to patristic literature now available in English. The translation combines the virtues of accuracy, an easy flowing English, and a flavour of the original; and it is preceded and accompanied by an excellent introduction and notes. If there be one small point at which one may cavil, it is that the translator seems to have nodded in what is practically the last note. The text in question, with its ascription of crucifixion as the mode of his martyrdom to St Paul, is undoubtedly not in accordance with the tradition. But unless an important element has been omitted in the note as it stands, it is difficult to see how matters are really to be improved in this respect by substituting first Peter for Paul, and then Andrew for Peter where the text goes on to speak of crucifixion head-downwards.

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ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTIANITY. Edited and translated by J. E. L. Oulton, D.D., and by H. Chadwick, B.D. (Library of Christian Classics. S.C.M. Press; 30s.)

This volume consists of selected translations from the writings of Clement of Alexandria and of Origen, with brief introductions and some notes. It is easy to criticize the selection made. Clement is only represented by two sections of the *Stromateis*; and one of these is the conventional and oddly uninspired section upon marriage. Origen is rather more fortunate, since the Dialogue with Heraclides is included,