

MENTAL HYGIENE AND CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES. By André Snoeck, S.J. (Mercier Press; 5s.)

The essential argument of this booklet expounds the distinction between unconscious forces determining behaviour and the discriminating and responsible free will. For this purpose, Père Snoeck defines an hypothetical 'psyche', unconscious, autonomic, related closely to the *soma*: a 'substructure' of the conscious personality. The psyche is subject to good or bad health, and is the proper charge of the psychologist in mental hygiene or the 'psychotherapist' in mental treatment: the conscious personality remains the concern of the priest and subject to the Church's laws and to normal everyday conflicts. The respective fields once outlined, points of contact and overlap are described, leading finally to the synthesis of mental health and holiness.

In Belgium, presumably, the Church is confronted by a powerful psychoanalytical dialectic which is atheistic, deterministic and materialistic. Less powerful, perhaps, in the United Kingdom, this dialectic is nevertheless infiltrating subtly into psychiatry; Père Snoeck's answer is therefore opportune.

Since St Paul (Romans 7, 14-25), the Church has taught clearly that man, though free of choice, yet finds his choice fettered by forces intrinsic and extrinsic, which overmaster the reason, attract the will and diminish responsibility. Upon this doctrine of limited responsibility, Catholic psychiatry, whether orientated analytically, psycho-biologically or neurologically, needs to take its firm stand.

This thesis would have stood out more clearly in Père Snoeck's treatment had it been more tersely and less ponderously framed; had it made clear the point that it was dealing with only a fragment of the whole field of mental hygiene; had its chapter headings and sub-headings been less woolly (note the ambiguity, as translated, of the heading 'Mental Hygiene and the Conception of Life'); had it, finally, received a better foreword and a translator more sympathetic to the differing idioms of French and English.

SEYMOUR SPENCER

ST GREGORY OF NYSSA: THE LORD'S PRAYER; THE BEATITUDES. Translated and annotated by Hilda C. Graef. (Ancient Christian Writers, No. 18: Longmans; 25s.)

It would be a truism to remark how reading the works of the Fathers is like entering another world, and this is not really because of their subject-matter, since religious books written in later ages do not, as a rule, induce any comparable feeling of an almost exotic strangeness. Why is it, then? There is, of course, their mode of expression involving a type of rhetoric no longer familiar; but also there is the fact, of which we become increasingly conscious as we read, that the problems which

concerned them are on a different plane from what interests the majority of men today. Whatever the reason, it remains unfortunately true that people do hesitate when it is suggested that they read the Fathers, and the present series of modern translations was undertaken precisely with the object of overcoming that hesitation. It aims, first of all, at presenting such works of the ancient writers as are best calculated to capture the attention of the average reader, and then to present them in a form as far removed as possible from the occasionally cumbersome style of earlier versions.

In the present instance the editors were happy in their choice of the work to be translated, and fortunate in securing the services of so accomplished a Greek scholar to do it.

St Gregory of Nyssa was what we would call 'a late vocation'. After his wife's death he took orders, and was given charge of a small diocese. He was not, however, a very successful bishop, lacking firmness, as well as prudence in financial matters, but he was, undoubtedly, one of the great mystical writers of the ancient world. An ardent admirer of Origen, he stands in that Cappadocian group ever on the watch for meanings hidden away behind the obvious sense of the inspired words of Holy Writ. They were not troubled, as a modern audience might be, by the fact that these 'explanations' were at times somewhat far-fetched provided they served to point some essential doctrine. 'Therefore we would disregard the obvious meaning as far as we can, since it is easily understood and quickly discovered by everybody; but we will endeavour as much as possible to let our minds penetrate the interior of the veil' (Sermon 5 on The Beatitudes, p. 135).

It is true, nevertheless, that in these series of homilies Gregory is more than elsewhere concerned with practical exhortation; while allegory is not entirely absent, it by no means fills the whole canvas. He has a gift for the apt simile which the translator has known how to preserve in its stringency. 'Mining silver, digging gold, and searching for transparent stones—for no other purpose save that your stomach, this perpetual tax-collector, may live daintily through all this' (p. 64). Quite 'modern', too, is his sermon on 'Blessed are the Peace-makers', betraying, as it does, an unusual psychological insight into the evils of jealousy.

There is a slight error on the very last page of the notes (Note 114, p. 198). According to the tradition attested by Origen, St Peter was crucified head downwards (Cf. *Cath. Encycl.*, vol. XI, p. 751).

Another, and more important, criticism concerns the translation of a Trinitarian passage occurring towards the end of the third sermon on The Lord's Prayer (pp. 54-55). We read: 'But as the being without cause, which belongs only to the Father, cannot be adapted to the Son and the Spirit, so again the being caused, which is the property of the

Son and the Spirit, cannot by its very nature, be considered in the Father. On the other hand, the being not ungenerated is common to the Son and the Spirit . . .'

While this passage can be rightly understood by those well versed in Greek Trinitarian terminology, it may occasion surprise to others. Briefly, for the question is too complicated to be discussed at length, Latin theology having avoided using the word 'cause' when speaking of the Trinity (since it implies a correlative: 'effect', and even the notion of 'before' and 'after'), it might have been better to avoid using it in a translation of this kind. If however the translator decided to follow the Greek literally (and, incidentally, according to Diekamp's text this would involve using a 'cause' phrase in the second sentence also instead of 'not ungenerated'), then a fuller explanation would seem to be called for in either the introduction or the notes. DESMOND SCHLEGEL, O.S.B.

MIDDLE EAST SURVEY. By S. A. Morrison. (S.C.M. Press; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Morrison was for over thirty years a missionary in Egypt, and is thus well qualified to discuss Middle East problems and tensions. He has written a fair and reasonable account, based on careful study of historical antecedents and present-day issues, political, religious, and economic, in the Middle East. His book is well produced, with map, index, population chart and selected bibliography. It is an excellent text-book.

He begins arbitrarily enough, with the final break-up of the great Ottoman Empire at the end of the first world war, and the subsequent formation of the Arab States. The relations of these States with the Western Powers, whose motives for interference in Middle East affairs have always been mixed and have become doubly suspect, are carefully discussed, and there is as unbiassed an account as it is possible to give of the stormy relations between the Arabs and the newly-formed State of Israel.

The grievance of both sides are examined, and Mr Morrison concludes, not unexpectedly, that it is very nearly impossible to come to a just solution of so complex a problem, but that it is the responsibility of the, at any rate so-called, Christian West, to formulate a solution that will be acceptable to both sides.

The most interesting part of the book, most interesting to Mr Morrison too, one would think, and which he would be best qualified to speak about but, in fact, discusses all too cursorily, is the problem of the co-existence of the three ancient faiths: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity: of their interaction on each other; and more especially of the influence of Western Christianity (since the ancient Eastern Churches are more or less decadent) on the rigid, formalized Islamic system of thought and life.

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