

## REVIEWS

SOURCES CHRETIENNES 32: GREGOIRE LE GRAND, MORALES SUR JOB: livres 1 et 2, Introduction et notes de Dom Robert Gillet, o.s.b., Traduction de Dom André de Gaudemaris, o.s.b. (Les Editions du Cerf; 900 frs.)

'A commentator on Holy Writ should behave like a river', says St Gregory in the dedication prefixed to his *Moralia in Iob*. 'For if, as the mainstream flows along, it skirts some low-lying valleys, forthwith it diverts its course into them, and when it has filled them to capacity, at once returns to its bed.'

The application of this principle explains why the flood of Gregory's thought filled, on this occasion, thirty-five meandering books. Of these, the *Sources Chrétiennes* have now given us the first two in the Maurist text with a pleasant French translation and a very good introduction. In view of the fact that it can scarcely be intended to publish the entire work, one wonders if it would not have been better, after establishing the general picture, to have devoted a larger section of the introduction to a study of what could be gathered from the two books that follow it: for it may be remarked that nearly all the footnotes to the exposition refer to other parts of the work. However, this is a minor criticism, and a host may well feel himself embarrassed when faced with selecting from so many dishes.

The *Moralia* is a collection of monastic conferences, partly delivered between the years 579-585 when St Gregory was in Constantinople as a papal legate, partly worked over or written up during that period, or even later. As Dom Gillet points out, the allusion to Augustine's missionary journey in England in *Mor.* xxvii, 21, can scarcely be before 596, the date for that event given in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The composition of what is in some ways an anatomy of the mind of that ideal sixth-century monk which Gregory always remained was therefore prolonged and occasional. Fittingly enough, the beauty of the work 'only reveals itself to the reader who is intent and unhurried, rare qualities in the modern world', says Dom Gillet. In fact it is the perfect fruit of that attentive monastic *lectio* through which, as the author himself describes in his letter to St Leander, 'sentiments of compunction filled me every day'. It is unfortunate that no single word can quite do duty for all that Gregory meant by *compunctio*. The writer of the present introduction has drawn on Dom Morin's analysis, amplified with some additional considerations of those passages where the Saint employs the word to describe both the joy and longing of those 'on whose inner ear already the music of heaven breaks, making them long each day for the company of the citizens

on high'. The reality of heaven, the vanishing quality of earth, the joy of vision and the burden of the flesh, the humility that comes from a sense of man's sinfulness, these are the things of which Gregory convinces his hearers, feeling all the while, stricken with sickness as he was, his fittingness to describe the stricken Job. Even in 1952 it probably seems to most people a somewhat poetic fancy to have to use the phrase 'this valley of tears'. But to one who really enters into Gregory's world it becomes a credible and even natural expression.

Dom Gillet gives some twenty pages to the discussion of Gregory's sources. As interesting as this is, one's final impression is that even his debt to Augustine could generally be sufficiently explained by an indirect knowledge through someone else, perhaps Caesarius of Arles. It lacks the vitality of immediate impact, a fact which gives him in some ways a greater kinship with the Middle Ages than with the world into which he was born. Dom Gillet describes this rather well when he says that the reader has constantly the sense of hearing things which he has heard before, but which he cannot quite place. 'Il se trouve seulement en présence d'une vaste communauté d'atmosphère.' It is, it may be added, an atmosphere which Christians of every degree may learn to savour according to their differing attractions, a stream one can ford or plunge in, a river 'in which the lamb can walk and the elephant can swim'.

ÆLFRED SQUIRE, O.P.

**TERTULLIAN: TREATISE ON MARRIAGE AND REMARRIAGE.** Translated by William P. Le Saint, S.J. (Ancient Christian Writers, Longmans; 25s.)

This valuable series of translations is now issued in Great Britain by Longmans at a uniform price. There is a reduction of 5s. on each volume to subscribers to the complete series. Nothing so good has appeared in English in the field of patristic texts, for not only are the translations generally accurate, and freshly idiomatic at the same time, but the introduction and notes maintain a high standard. The editors are abreast of the latest scholarship in Europe and America.

This, the first volume of Tertullian to appear in the series, contains the treatises *To His Wife*, *An Exhortation to Chastity*, and *Monogamy*. These three treatises contain important matter for the historian of the sacraments, and for the history of morals. In them we see also stages in Tertullian's movement towards heresy, culminating in the fierce fanaticism of the third treatise, the more devastating in that the author's literary brilliance in no way weakened as his obsessions grew stronger. This is a volume for the historian rather than for the general public.

A.R.