

Saint Gregory Nazianzen: *Selected Poems*. Translated with an Introduction by J. A. McGuckin. Oxford: SLG Press (Fairacres Publication 94), 1986, paper, 44 pages. Price £1.00.

The Rev. Dr. Hohn McGuckin is professor of Patristics at la Sainte Union College, Southampton (England), and not unfamiliar to the readers of the PBR. Dr. McGuckin's published work includes numerous articles on theological topics, and two books on Patristics: *Symeon the New Theologian, Chapters and Discourses*, and *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*.

Dr. McGuckin's present publication, although small in number of pages, is a most welcome addition to the old and incomplete translations of St. Gregory's poetry by H. S. Boyd (1814), J. Brownlie (1913), F. Cordaro (Italian, 1955), P. Gallay (French, 1941), J. H. Newman (1896), M. Pellegrino (Italian, 1939). True, there are several recent books on Saint Gregory of Nazianzus besides those enlisted on Dr. McGuckin's bibliography, for instance the ones by D. F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation* (Cambridge, MA. 1979), and R.R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (Oxford, 1969), which are not included in the bibliography of Dr. McGuckin. However, scholars and even the specialists consistently refrained from translating Gregory's poetry because his poetic Greek is frequently cast in Homeric style and is particularly difficult, often deliberately obscure, suggestive, ironic, and too complicated to be rendered into English verse that could claim poetic merit of its own (as Newman did for only a very few of the poems).

This selection of only twenty poems, from over four hundred that St. Gregory the Theologian composed, is nevertheless one of the largest English editions. It was a personal choice designed to represent some of Gregory's more overtly Christological writing by a few of the dogmatic poems, and some of his smaller, more intimate meditations, especially his prayers, doxologies and laments. In these Gregory chooses to meet Arian and Apollinarian heretics on their own ground and demonstrates that Christians are as cultured as the pagans. «Like a window momentarily opened on a lost and distant world: such are the joys of reading Gregory's poetry», says Dr. McGuckin so insightfully.

This charming and delightful selection offers besides helpful comments and notes, a select bibliography, also a long and useful Introduction describing Gregory's life, the historical context of the theological controversies of the period, and the significance of the points of doctrine expressed in these poems.

The reviewer cordially congratulates the author and wishes him all the strength and patience in translating many more precious poems from the πνευματοκίνητον Gregorian pen!

Kingston, New York

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