

must restrain our severity and hardness and be not at all pitiless in dealing with the brethren. Rather should we mourn with them that mourn and weep with them that weep, raising also them that have fallen by the way with the solace of our love and (as far as is in us) the strength of our aid. This, too, must we have in mind: that while mercilessness is not of true justice (the justice of God), neither is mere laxness of true mercy. But behold one of the brethren prostrate and wounded by the way, maimed by the adversary in the battle of life. See the devil who standeth by to finish his evil work and destroy that which he hath wounded. Behold, there standeth by, also, the Lord and he exhorteth with the prayer of Calvary that he whom he hath redeemed be not permitted to perish. On whose side do we stand? With the demon that he may kill his prey: with the priest and the Levite who look the other way as in the gospel? Nay, rather with him who is our brother, even as he is our creator; our advocate, even as he is our judge.



REVIEWS

ÉTUDES SUR LES PROPHETES D'ISRAËL. By Béguerie, Leclercq, and Steinmann. (Cerf, Collection 'Lectio Divina' No. 14; 480 fr.)

ST MATTHEW AND ST MARK. By A. Farrer. (Dacre Press; 25s.)

The title of the collection to which the first of these two books belongs is a portent of the wave of *ressourcement* which is passing through the Church in our time: the 'spiritual reading' of the individual era is yielding before a re-emergence of the ancient *lectio divina*. The basis of this more traditional reading is the Bible, first of all the text itself, and then commentary on the text. It is natural, then, that the modern awakening of interest among Catholics in the Bible should be accompanied by a parallel interest in the biblical commentaries of the Fathers. It would, however, be false to the spirit of patristic exegesis for a modern reader to limit himself to the commentaries of an Augustine and a Gregory and ignore the results of modern scholarship—false, because at one time Augustine and Gregory were themselves the *dernier cri*. At the same time it must be admitted that not all modern work on the Bible immediately lends itself to 'devout' reading. Too often such

work is too highly technical and conceived in a spirit very remote from any that can be called religious.

If the two books under review can be confidently recommended as suitable auxiliaries to *lectio divina*, it is because they avoid at least one of these strictures. The French volume (consisting of four promising studies on the prophets by two young Holy Ghost Fathers, ably chaperoned by an already accomplished exegete in this field, the Abbé Steinmann, who also contributes a study) may be described as a critical *haute vulgarisation* of the important but highly technical work of the Scandinavian scholars, Engnell, Haldar, and Kapelrud.

Dr Farrer's book is certainly not lacking in high technicality. Its reading demands a sustained application if the brain is not to be seized up in an arithmetical whirl. Yet quite apart from his attractive style which is expert to spur on more slow-moving minds to face the seemingly endless series of hurdles erected by his swift intelligence, it is the general spirit which inspires his work which makes his book more than an intellectual exercise. For in Dr Farrer the typological exegesis of the Fathers has had a brilliant resurgence in our days. This may not be a book that can be read quietly at the prie-dieu (nor for that matter in the fireside armchair). But if it drives the reader to his desk to jot down remarks together with frequent consultation of his gospel text, the result is not necessarily less of a spiritual enrichment.

It would be wrong, however, to stress the ingenuity of this book without also mentioning the humility of the author. This is a sequel to his *A Study in St Mark*, and in it he freely confesses to mistakes made in the earlier book. Due no doubt to this sobering fact the present book has less of the finish of the earlier as well as of *A Rebirth of Images*. As a consequence we are given rather a closer glimpse of the writer's workshop, with some still undeveloped work still on the bench. No doubt this readiness with a *retractio* will have raised a few cynical eyebrows in certain academic circles where a strange premium is put on intellectual impotence. But for many other readers this further link with St Augustine will be a winsome feature of Dr Farrer's book.

RONALD TORBET, O.P.

THE ASCETIC LIFE. THE FOUR CENTURIES ON CHARITY. By St Maximus the Confessor. Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. XXI. Translated by Polycarp Sherwood, O.S.B., S.T.D. (Longmans; 25s.)

Growth in the ascetic life and growth in charity are for St Maximus two aspects of a single process, and therefore *The Ascetic Life* begins with the love of God for men revealed in the Incarnation, and proceeds to an analysis of the way our love for God is shown by obedience to his commandments, summed up in Christ's commandment of love,