

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