

rature et théologie" ainsi que les grandes bibliothèques ; un instrument de travail "pour étudiants et chercheurs" ; une mine fort riche que pourront exploiter ceux qui s'emploient aujourd'hui à une meilleure connaissance de la Préréforme française, notamment à Meaux, à partir de 1521.

Meaux

Michel Veissière

THOMAS MORE ET UN JUIF CHRÉTIEN DE NOTRE TEMPS

Le 24 novembre 1973 mourait le P. Jean de Menasce, éminent dominicain, professeur à l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, sur qui a paru un livre de souvenirs et de correspondance : *La porte sur le jardin* (éd. du Cerf, Paris, 1975). Un autre dominicain, le P. Alex Ceslas Rzewuski, dans un ouvrage où il raconte son étonnante jeunesse et sa propre conversion, évoque cette grande figure en des termes qui toucheront les amis de Thomas More ;

"Comment décrire ce que fut le P. de Menasce ? Pour moi, dès son arrivée à Fribourg en 1938 il fut toujours un incomparable ami. Il possédait une personnalité faite de capacités dont chacune, prise à part, frisait la perfection, ce qui n'empêchait pas leur ensemble d'avoir fait de lui l'être peut-être le plus simple et le plus harmonieux que j'ai rencontré durant le long chemin de ma vie. La perfection de son âme n'avait d'égale que celle de son intelligence et l'étendue de sa science. Le tout semblait mu par le souffle de Dieu qui l'avait comblé d'une plénitude de dons naturels et surnaturels. Si j'avais à le comparer à quelqu'un dont l'histoire nous a gardé les traits, c'est à quelque grand seigneur de la Renaissance que je le ferais, à un Thomas More par exemple, dont il avait la distinction et la culture. Mais, remontant plus haut dans l'histoire, n'avait-il pas, lui, ce converti, il est vrai, du judaïsme, certains traits communs avec ce grand converti du manichéisme que fut saint Augustin ? De ces deux grands personnages, il possédait l'incomparable "outlook" sur l'univers, et aussi le raffinement. Ou encore n'y avait-il pas en lui quelque chose des grands sages d'Alexandrie -- qui fut d'ailleurs le lieu de sa naissance -- d'un Clément, d'un Origène, ou, avant eux encore, d'un Philon, le philosophe juif, qui fut un sage de l'époque de Jésus-Christ."

A travers l'invisible cristal (Plon 1972, p. 473-4)
(communiqué par Soeur Marie-Claire Robineau, o.p.)

DE TRISTITIA CHRISTI

The Complete Works of St Thomas More, Volume 14, Parts I and II, Edited and Translated by Clarence H. Miller. New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 1976. Pp. xiii, 1-691 ; vii, 695-1192. \$ 60.00.

These two large, handsome, and inevitably expensive volumes are a truly monumental, in fact wholly ideal, edition of a text which has a special interest and value. *De Tristitia Christi* was St Thomas More's last work, written in the Tower while he was awaiting execution. One particular fact brings us close to grim actualities : although the treatise seems to have been "very nearly" done, it was left unfinished because, in the words of More's granddaughter, Mary Basset, "when he had written this farre, he was in prison kepte so streyght, that all his bokes and penne and ynke and paper was taken from hym, and sone after was he putte to death" (p. 1165). The holograph manuscript of More's original Latin was discovered by Geoffrey Bullough in 1963, in the Chapel of Relics of the Royal College of Corpus Christi in Valencia : it had presumably been smuggled out of the Tower and been preserved by More's daughter, Margaret Roper, and her daughter Mary Basset ; and thence it passed through several Spanish hands. The manuscript contains endless alterations made by More and some (in brown ink) made by others, the latter mostly in the way of what we could call copy-editing. After the *De Tristitia* breaks off, there follows a series of biblical quotations and reflections on martyrdom which, though related to *De Tristitia* appear to be "a completely independent composition" (696). }

In the first volume a facsimile of the difficult holograph (which can be called "almost unfailingly clear" only for expert readers), a transcript (with brief textual notes), and the editor's translation are arranged for the reader's convenience : the facsimile on the left page, faced by the corresponding parts of the transcript and translation on the right. The second volume contains an elaborate Introduction on the character and history of

the holograph; the relationships of actual and hypothetical texts and the changes or slips made by early "editors"; the circumstances and manner of composition; and a detailed analysis of More's "Patterns of Style and Thought." A likewise elaborate Commentary has two parts: "Notes on the Revisions in the Valencia Manuscript" (789-999) and "Historical and Explanatory Notes" (1003-66). In this second part the editor "relies heavily on the glosses in the Froben bible of 1498 and Aquinas' *Catena aurea*... which... provide the groundwork" of More's exegesis (781). One of the appendices reprints Mary Basset's translation (1075-1165), which had been made from a text now lost and had been included in More's *English Workes* of 1557.

The theme and scope of More's meditative discourse are made clear in the full title (in the editor's translation): "The Sadness, the Weariness, the Fear, and the Prayer of Christ Before He Was Taken Prisoner. Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 18." The work is a consecutive commentary on the gospel narratives of the Passion up to the point where it breaks off with the seizure of Christ by the Roman soldiers and the crowd of servants sent by the Jewish religious leaders. At the very end, in the last of his references to John Gerson (623), More says that this is the one place where he departs from the sequence of events as presented in Gerson's *Monotessaron* and accepted by many though not all the great authorities.

I can touch on only one or two points in More's mode of treatment and the editor's full critical account of his style and substance. To quote one summary statement (769),

A group of polarities, most of them related to each other and to the united duality of Christ, pervades the *De Tristitia*: humanity and divinity, body and soul, passions and reason, the literal and figurative meanings of scripture, fearful martyrs and brave ones.

More stresses Christ's divine ability to have overwhelmed His captors if He had chosen so to do and at the same time His determination to obey the Father's will and His own, to suffer all the agonizing fears and pains entailed by His human role. Such emphasis is part of the presentation of the unique Exem-

plar for the spiritual and moral strengthening of readers (if we assume that More expected publication) -- and of the author. The minute exegesis embodies continual direct inference and application to the life and trials and weaknesses of mankind; and inference can be figurative or allegorical as well as literal, for instance in the early remarks on place-names. But, while More must be writing partly if not wholly to fortify himself for martyrdom, he maintains, as the editor shows, a deliberate objectivity: if we read the work with no knowledge of the author's identity and situation, we might readily suppose that it was written by a cleric or monk (one, to be sure, of rare spiritual quality) in the untroubled seclusion of his study or cell. Since, however, we have that knowledge, we can hardly help feeling a quickened and heightened response to many things in or behind the words we read.

Although the theme and close approach of martyrdom largely forbid the intrusion of classical influence (More does admit aphoristic phrases from Terence, Virgil, Horace, and Juvenal), the author of *Richard III* and *Utopia* is not wholly absent. As a devout and resolute Catholic layman aware of the betrayal of their faith by clerics high and low, More can speak in terms of plain outrage like these: "drunk with the new wine of the devil, the flesh, and the world, they [some bishops] sleep like pigs sprawling in the mire" (263); the sacramental bread is "consecrated and handled by unchaste, profligate, and sacrilegious priests" (351). But he has a more subtle weapon capable even here of both humorous and higher uses. It was said of the everyday More, we remember, that he could seldom make a remark to anyone without ministering a mock in the communication thereof. We remember, too, his and Erasmus' early interest in Lucian and their own instinctive vein of an irony well beyond Lucian's. Going along with Erasmus, more enjoys the pungent satirical irony with which St Paul "gracefully polishes off the Corinthians... where he asks pardon because he never burdened any of them with charges and expenses" (293, 295, 1030-31; 2 Cor. 12:13). Irony can, for More himself, rise to tragic poignancy: the editor points out that his treat-

ment of Judas' "position, deeds, and death" is almost wholly (and of course abhorrently) ironic (760). On the highest level, following Erasmus in opposition to the church fathers, More can see Christ himself as a sad and conscious ironist when for the third time He arouses the sleeping disciples in Gethsemane (289, 293, 1030).

It is hardly possible to overpraise the learning, critical insight, skill, and enormous labor of the editor and translator. Professor Miller answers not only all the questions any reader could ask but innumerable others that a reader would not know or see enough to raise. Along with evidence already manifest, we might note that the 211 pages of the first part of the Commentary, in addition to recording More's countless revisions, explain the probable stylistic or substantive reasons for them. The style and tone of the faithful and very readable translation range, with More's Latin, from the most earnest utterances of devout faith to homely, realistic censure of weakness and wickedness: "the hypocritical pharisee ... snoring away in his soft bed" (35); "We [people supposedly praying] scratch our heads, clean our fingernails with a pocketknife, pick our noses with our fingers, meanwhile making the wrong responses" (127). A small example of an abstract phrase happily turned into traditional homespun is "wool-gathering" for "animi queuis inepta distractio" (141).

I find that I cannot end a sketchy description of this solid and more than satisfying edition without recalling that -- like the late Edward Surtz, to whose memory the work is dedicated -- Professor Miller was once a student of mine; and, while of course I cannot claim any credit for their gifts and virtues, I may be allowed to feel some special pleasure and pride in their achievements.