

BOOK CHRONICLE

SOME RECENT COMMENTARIES ON THE BIBLE

IT is well over two years since my last bulletin of recent Catholic commentaries and translations of the Bible has been published (*Mel. Theol.* Vol. II, No. 1, April 1949, 70-2) and one naturally expects a plentiful crop of publications to have come out during this period. The largest output comes from France, but the contribution of other countries though perhaps less voluminous, is by no means inferior either in exegetical importance or biblical scholarship.

The Catholic Biblical Association of America, which gave us the *Book of Genesis* in 1948, has now given us *The Book of Psalms and the Canticles of the Roman Breviary* (1950, vi 302). The title is the same as that of the new Latin translation of the Psalms *Liber Psalmorum cum canticis Breviarii Romani* (Rome, 1945). The English translation agrees substantially with the Latin without, however, following it slavishly. In fact it disagrees with it in not a few cases.

The French Commentary **La Sainte Bible** is nearing completion. Volumes III, IV and XI 1st part have been published during the period under review. Vol. III contains: *Josue* by A. Gelin; *Judges* and *Ruth* by R. Tamisier; *Samuel* and *Kings* by A. Médebielle. Each commentary utilizes all the available historical evidence derived from newly discovered documents, inscriptions and excavations. Problems of literary criticism are briefly, but clearly and fairly, discussed, and special consideration is given to the doctrinal contents of each book. A. Gelin rightly rejects the Wellhausenian theory which attaches *Josue* to the **Pentateuch**. The Israelites' occupation of Palestine is dated, with many modern scholars, in the XIII century B.C. *Josue* as well as *Judges*, *Samuel* and *Kings* are a compilation of earlier documents which, however, cannot be always distinguished. The Law-book found in the temple during *Josias'* reign was Deuteronomy. Volume IV contains: *Paralipomena* by L. Machal; *Esdra-Nehemias* by A. Médebielle; *Tobias* by A. Clamer; *Judith* and *Esther* by L. Soubigou; *Job* by E. Robin. The historical value of *Paralipomena* is upheld, and the priestly character of

the narrative is attributed to the particular scope of the writer. The writer's scope and the literary genre chosen by him account also for the differences between Samuel-Kings and Paralipomena. Médebielle defends the traditional order of Esdras-Nehemias, as well as the actual order of the text. Tobias is translated from the Greek text of the Codex Sinaiticus. The narrative is not strictly historical, but is rather an elaboration of a historical nucleus, although it is not always possible to distinguish the historical elements from its purely literary embellishments. Judith may be an amplification of a historical event, but the commentator is very reserved in expressing his view. Nabuchodonosor is identified with Artaxerxes III and the story is dated in 353-351 B.C. Esther, however, is strictly historical and was written before the overthrow of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. A much discussed question is the place of the deuterocanonical sections, which in Greek are distributed throughout the book in their proper context, while in the Vulgate they are relegated to the end of the book. Soubigou follows the Latin arrangement, owing perhaps to the Vulgate text which is printed along with the French translation. The integrity of the book of Job is maintained, but the speeches of Elihu are, perhaps, a later addition. The book seems to have been written towards the close of the 6th century or the beginning of the 5th. The analysis of the doctrinal contents is too brief and inadequate. Volume XI, part 1 contains the *Acts of the Apostles* by J. Renié. As the Greek text of Acts has come down to us in two main forms represented by the Old Uncials and by the so-called "Western" text respectively, Renié has followed an eclectic form of text critically reconstructed from the various families of texts. The commentary is sound and comprehensive and, though perhaps a little lengthy, rich in philological and historical information.

The **Bible de Jerusalem** is going ahead rapidly. Since my last notice in 1949 the number of fascicles has increased from four to twenty. Other parts are expected to come out very soon, and the whole work, consisting of forty parts will be completed in 1952. The books published during the last two years are the following: *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy* by H. Cazelles; *Josue* by F.-M. Abel O.P.; *Kinias* by R. de Vaux O.P.; *Job* by Larcher O.P.; *Psalms* by R. Tournay O.P. and R. Schwab; *Ecclesiastes* by R. Pautrel S.J.; *Wisdom* by E. Osty; *Isaïe* by P.

Auvray and J. Steinmann; *Ezekiel* by P. Auvray; *Matthew* by P. Benoit O.P.; *Corinthians* by E. Osty; *Philippians*, *Philemon*, *Colossians*, *Ephesians* by P. Benoit O.P.; *Hebrews* by C. Spicq O.P.; *the Apocalypse* by Boismard O.P. All these parts maintain the same standard of scholarship and production, and the same disposition. A brief introduction deals with the main questions of authorship, composition, sources; the notes are divided into two groups, textual notes justifying the selection of particular readings and explanatory notes helping the reader to understand the text.

The general critical tendency of these commentaries is that of combining, as far as possible, the results of modern literary criticism with the generally accepted traditional truths. Thus the Mosaic authorship of **Deuteronomy** is maintained, but only in the sense that Moses has drawn the main lines which were later developed by the addition of the oral interpretation of the Mosaic Law during the monarchy, especially after the fall of the Northern kingdom. Josias' reform was carried out on the ground of Deuteronomy. A second edition, incorporating further additions, was made after the disastrous events of 589-588 (pp. 13-15). **Kings** was written after the discovery of the Law-book in 621 and probably before Josias' death in 609. A second edition, on deuteronomic lines, was made during the exile after 562 and later revised and enlarged by extensive retouches (pp. 15-17). The unity of authorship of **Job** is maintained except for Elihu's speeches which are said to be added by an inspired writer (pp. 10-13). David is the principal author of the **Psalms** in the sense that he is "le plus notable et le plus éminent" (p. 16). But we cannot even approximately determine the number of psalms written by the king-poet. The psalms are classified according to their literary genre (pp. 16-33; 57-59). The unity of authorship of **Isaias** is upheld with certain restrictions. Chapters 40-66 and some chapters of Part I (1-39), i.e. chapters 13; 14; 24-27; 33-35, are attributed to the prophet's disciples, not only his immediate disciples, but also those that were in any way connected with the "Isaian school of thought". The theory of a Trito-Isaias is rejected, but chapters 56-66 are attributed partly to the exilic Isaian school, partly to postexilic disciples (pp. 12-17). This explanation agrees, to a certain extent, with that proposed by E. Kissane, who believes that the book of Isaias is the work of an unknown editor who collected Isaias' genuine prophecies from tra-

dition and arranged them in their present form (*The Book of Isaiah*, 2 vols, Dublin, 1941-1943) **Ezekiel's** ministry, which is commonly placed in the exile, partly before and partly after the destruction of Jerusalem, is divided into two periods, a Jerosolimitan ministry and an exilic ministry. Consequently many of his oracles are said to have been delivered in Jerusalem (pp. 13-15; see also the author's *Ezéchiel* published in the series *Témoins de Dieu*, 1947).

The Italian translation which is being published by the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome under the general editorship of Father A. Vaccari S.J. made no progress during the last two years, but the poetical books have passed into a second edition in two parts (1949/50, pp. 347, 309) which is almost a reprint of the first edition which appeared in 1925.

Mgr Garofalo's Italian Bible has been enriched by two commentaries, *Kings* by the editor (1951), and the *Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians* by Mgr V. Jacono (1951). The general lay-out of the series is: introduction, the Latin text of the Valgate and an Italian translation from the original languages on opposite pages (the Epistles of St Paul are in Latin and Greek besides the Italian translation), a double set of footnotes, textual and exegetical. The general tendency of the series is that of a well-balanced scholarship. Problems of literary criticism are clearly set and discussed, and the commentator's views, though sometimes very reservedly expressed, are never those of an uncritical conservatism; see for example Rinaldi's explanation of the origin of the book of Daniel (pp. 8-15).

In a previous bulletin I announced the forthcoming publication of an English Commentary on the whole Bible in one volume (*Mel. Theol.* Vol. I, No. 4, Nov. 1948, 63f). Now I am glad to bring to our readers' knowledge the news that the book will be published towards the close of this year or the beginning of next year. Further information will be given as soon as it becomes available.

Before closing this brief survey of biblical translations I wish to add a few words on my own Maltese translation. The parts so far published cover the historical and the poetical books. *Isaiah* will be out shortly. The remaining prophets will be published during the next year. It is hoped that the Old Testament will be completed in the year 1952 or, perhaps, in the spring of 1953.

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