

Book Chronicle

BIBLE translations and commentaries continue to come out with unabated speed. Since the last Book Chronicle, dated 7th February 1953, published in the second number of Volume 5, for the year 1952, the Bible de Jerusalem has given us 8 more parts, that is, *Samuel* by De Vaux O.P.; *Esdras et Néhémie* by Gelin; *L'Ecclésiastique* by Dom H. Duesberg O.S.B. and P. Auvray; *Habaquq, Abdias, Joël* by J. Trinquet; *L'Evangile et les Epîtres de Saint Jean* by D. Mollat S.J. and F. Braun O.P.; *Les Actes des Apôtres* by L. Cerfaux and Dom J. Dupont O.S.B.; *Les Epîtres de Saint Paul aux Galates et aux Romains* by S. Lyonnet S.J.; *Les Epîtres Catholiques de Saint Jacques, Saint Jude et Saint Pierre* by R. Leconte.

In the Introduction to the books of *Samuel*, De Vaux follows the modern critical view according to which these books are a compilation from various sources. He distinguishes three main strands of tradition: a pro-monarchical and an anti-monarchical tradition, and a narrative containing an account of many events of David's life. But he refuses to recognize in the first two traditions the continuation of the Pentateuchal sources J and E. These three sources, which contain much old material, were put together about the year 700 and revised after the deuteronomic reform and re-edited shortly before the exile. Although one may sometimes disagree with the author's reconstruction of the literary history of the books of *Samuel* and with his textual emendations, one cannot but admire the author's first-hand and first-rate geographical and archaeological knowledge which marks the notes throughout. Gelin follows Hoonacker in placing Nehemias' activity before that of Esdras, but disagrees with him in excluding Artaxerxes II from the history of Esdras and Nehemias and restricting their activity to the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 B.C.). Nehemias, therefore, is said to have come to Jerusalem in 425 where he remained for 12 years (Neh. 5, 14). The arrival of Esdras is dated in the 37th year of Artaxerxes I, that is, in 427. This date is based on an emendation of 'seventh year' (Esd. 7, 7) to 'thirty-seventh'. Esdras remained in Jerusalem for one year and a few months. In 425 he returned back to Babylon, and, before the death of Artaxerxes I in 424, Nehemias came again to Jerusalem to settle certain matters that had arisen after his departure. This chronological reconstruction, especially Nehemias' second visit immediately after Esdras' return, seems to

imply that Esdras' mission was a complete failure and that Nehemias' intervention was necessary. But the emendation of 'seven' to 'thirty-seven', though accepted by such scholars as Bever and Albright, is not supported by textual evidence, and a one-year unsuccessful ministry by no means justifies the high reputation which Esdras has ever enjoyed among his co-religionists.

The main problem which confronts the translator of *Ecclesiasticus* is the critical reconstruction of the text. As the Greek version, in spite of its deficiencies, represents a form of text that is older than that of any of the extant Hebrew fragments, the translators Dom. H. Duesberg O.S.B. and P. Auvray have systematically followed the LXX except in those rare cases where the Greek text is hopelessly corrupt or where the corruption is obvious. Another reason for the translators' preference of the LXX is their belief in the inspiration of the Greek version (p. 22; see also P. Auvray *Comment se pose le probleme de l'inspiration des Septante*, *Revue bibl.*, 1952, 321-36). A comparison between this translation and that by Father A. Vaccari S.J. (*I Libri Poetici*, Roma, 1925) would be highly instructive. *Habaquq* is dated about 599/8. The translator has utilized the *Habakkuk Commentary of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. The composition of *Abdias* is brought down to the year 450 and that of *Joel* to about 445-400. Chapters 1 and 2 are said to be a prophetic liturgy or a prophetic appeal for penance and prayers in time of a national calamity; chapters 3 and 4 are an apocalypse describing the last judgment. The first part is written by the prophet himself, the other part is supposed to have been written by an anonymous author who may be called Deutero-Joel. *St Jean* includes both the Gospel and the Letters. The Gospel is the work of John the Apostle, but its final edition is the work of his disciples who are also responsible for the present arrangement of the text, for certain complementary additions and retouches. Thus 3, 31-36 and 12, 44-50 are considered to be additions inserted by the disciples; so probably also ch 21. Chs 15 and 16 are regarded as a later elaboration of Christ's discourse after the last supper by John himself. Chs 5 and 6, which are generally transposed by modern interpreters, are maintained in their present order, and the unnamed feast of the Jews (5, 1) is identified with Pentecost. The historical character is strongly defended; the facts are real, but they are viewed in a spiritual light, and this is the symbolical element

which must necessarily be recognised in the IV Gospel. The *Letters* do not raise important literary problems. The First is an encyclical letter addressed to the Churches of Asia warning them against the danger of relapsing into idolatry. The Second and Third are addressed to particular Churches. The elect Lady is a metaphor for the Church, but Gaius is one of the Apostle's disciples. The First is the latest and is contemporary with the Gospel; the Second and Third are earlier.

Acts narrates the history of the primitive Church from Jerusalem to Antioch through Judaea and Samaria, and from Antioch to Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia. The author is Luke, Paul's companion, who wrote about 62/63 during Paul's two-year detention in Rome. In the first 15 chapters he made use of written sources, very probably Greek sources translated from Aramaic. The translators have generally followed the shorter form of Greek text, departing from it only when the reading of the Western text had a stronger claim for originality. *Romans* and *Galatians* are closely related. They both deal with one of the basic points of Paul's theology, namely, the necessity of faith for justification and the insufficiency of the Law, with the difference that *Romans* deals rather with the positive aspect, while *Galatians* emphasizes the negative doctrinal aspect. The integrity of *Romans* is upheld. The early date for *Galatians* is rejected, and its composition is placed between 1Cor. and 2Cor. The Letter of *James* is one of the earliest N. Testament writings. There are no sufficient reasons for identifying the writer of the Letter with either of the homonymous Apostles, James the son of Alphaeus, or James, the son of Zebedee. James does not depend on Paul. The recent discovery of manuscripts in Qumran, near the Dead Sea, has shed much light on the Jewish doctrine of the gratuity of justification, and both Paul and James may have drawn from common sources. The Letter of *Jude* was probably written shortly after the year 70 and was addressed to Gentile converts. The First Letter of *Peter* is, probably, a baptismal exhortation corresponding to its central part (1, 12-4, 11), supplemented by a disciple of the Apostle. But the Second seems to be a pseudonymous letter written about the year 80.

The French series *La Sainte Bible*, which is being published under the direction of Pirot-Clamer, has been enriched by a commentary on *Genesis* by A. Clamer. The translator and commentator follows closely De Vaux in his explanation of the ori-

gin and composition of the Pentateuch (see *Mcl. Theol.* Vol. V. No. 2, 1952, p. 111f). The commentary is most extensive in the Old Testament section and is well abreast of all the relevant literature. In textual criticism the translator mostly agrees with De Vaux. In 6, 14 *qinnim*, which is usually translated 'nests, compartments', is vocalized *qanim* 'reeds' by Clamer and De Vaux. The same reading has been proposed quite independently by E. Ullendorff in *Vetus Testamentum* (Vol. IV, 1954, pp. 95f). In 10, 10 both Clamer and De Vaux emend the proper name *kalne* into *kullana* 'all of them'.

The Westminster Version is proceeding slowly, owing to the increasing difficulties of publication. *Daniel* was published in 1948 and was noticed in this periodical in the first number of 1949 (p. 70). Now, after 6 years, we are glad to record another part covering five of the Minor Prophets, namely Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai and Zechariah translated and annotated by the Rev. Seb. Bullough O.P. The introduction to, and the commentaries on, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Haggai and Zechariah are mainly reproduced from *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* published last year. The disposition is the same as that of most of the O. Testament books in the Westminster Version, introduction, translation and notes. Fr. Bullough has endeavoured to reproduce in his translation the rhythm of the Hebrew verse by adopting the English "Sprung Rhythm" which consists of a fixed number of stressed syllables and a variable number of unstressed ones. The introductions are judiciously conservative. The second part of Zechariah is attributed to the prophet who wrote it many years after having written the first part. The commentary is brief but illuminating. Textual difficulties are discussed and conjectural emendations are sometimes proposed. The identification of Sheshbazzar with Zerubbabel is very doubtful. The book is printed by the new typolith process.

The Italian Commentary *La Sacra Bibbia*, which is being published under the direction of Mgr Garofalo, has now reached its thirteenth instalment out of the 33 parts which will make up the whole work. These parts have been published during the year 1953: *Tobit* by G. Priero; *Maccabees* by A. Penna; *Baruch* by A. Penna; *Amos* by G. Rinaldi; the *Pastorals* by P. De Ambroggi. All these volumes maintain the same standard of scholarship of the previous ones, that is, comprehensiveness of treatment of literary problems, soundness of judgment in controver-

sial questions and lucidity of exposition in the notes. In particular, *Tobit* is considered to be a historical narrative in the sense defined by the latest ecclesiastical documents. As regards the relation between *Tobit* and the story of Ahikar, Priero is inclined on recognizing a certain dependence of *Tobit* on Ahikar, but he is very cautious against drawing too easy conclusions. I wonder whether all will agree with Priero in giving the preference to the Vaticanus against the Sinaiticus, which seems to have stronger claims for originality. The name *Maccabee* is explained after Bevan and Abel 'the naming of the Lord' against the current interpretation 'hammerer'. The history related in 1 Macc., in spite of its incomplete and religious character, is based on real facts and first-hand information and can in no way be considered tendentious. The book was written under John Hyrcanus (135-104), probably during the first half of his reign. 2Macc. is a religious history centring on the Temple. This however is not a sufficient reason for rejecting its authority as a historical source. Jason was very probably an eye-witness of the events related in his book, which was written in the same time as 1Macc. *Baruch* is a composite work. Part I (1, 1-3, 8) was written by Baruch himself during the exile. Part II (3, 9-4, 4) belongs to the Wisdom literature and was written, very probably, during the Persian age. Part III (4, 5-5, 9) was written by an unknown writer towards the end of the exile. The common background, which is that of the exile, may have contributed to their combination in one book. *Amos*, the first of the prophets in their chronological order, is preceded by an introduction into the Prophets which runs to 120 pages. The Introduction deals with such problems as the prophetic movement, earlier and later prophetism; the charismatic phenomena of prophetic inspiration; religious doctrine of the prophets; the composition of the prophetic writings; the prophets and the history of Israel; the book of the Minor Prophets. The several chapters are sometimes very loosely connected, and certain minor questions, such as the relation of the earlier prophets to cult, the gradual growth of the prophetic books and their final edition are very lightly touched upon. The commentary is full and up-to-date, the philological notes are brief but accurate and reliable; in textual criticism the author is very cautious. In 3, 12 the difficult word which R. leaves untranslated should very probably be emended and translated 'the upper end of the couch'. I have translated 'fug xifer is-sodda, fuq

ras il-friex'. The Pauline authorship of the *Pastoral Letters* is strongly defended, and their composition is placed in the years 64-66.

Father A. Vaccari has given us the first instalment of the Prophets covering *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah* with Lamentations and Baruch. As in the other volumes the introductions are very brief, but the translation is terse and fluent and the notes copious. Fr Vaccari admits that the book of Isaiah has grown up from smaller collections, but he does not consider the theory of a Deutero-Isaiah writing during the exile to be really convincing. Jeremiah is the author of the whole of his book; but Baruch, besides writing down Jeremiah's words, may to a certain extent have given a literary expression to Jeremiah's ideas. The textual differences between the Massoretic text and the Greek version of the book of Jeremiah are attributed to different editions of the book made either by Baruch or by Jeremiah himself. *Lamentations* is a collection of poems written by different and unknown authors. Baruch wrote the first part of his book (1, 1-3, 8); the other two parts were written during the exile by unknown authors. A critical appendix at the end of the book explains the readings adopted in the translation.

I am glad to announce the publication of the translation of the Gospel of St Matthew, which is the first instalment of my Maltese translation of the New Testament.

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