

THE *CERF* EDITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

THE translators of old have shown themselves mainly anxious to be strictly faithful to the original texts or the Vulgate; though the Authorized Version in particular was a classic which will always hold a very honourable place in our literature. But the desire has steadily grown in many countries for a blend of perfect scholarship with a perfect literary style, and of this craving the *Cerf* edition in French furnishes a fruit. Its official title is the Jerusalem Bible, as being brought out under the competent charge of the Dominican Fathers of the École Biblique at Jerusalem. It is an interesting fact that the English effort in the same direction is also centred upon 'Jerusalem', as it is called, the Jerusalem chamber at Westminster Abbey, whence also was issued the Revised Version, a considerable improvement upon which may be looked for both from the scholarly and the literary point of view, no less than in the French effort.

The attempt to give the text a pleasing appearance is not entirely successful, at all events in the prose books. Having threshed the matter out carefully at the time when we were beginning the Westminster Version, I still think that it is better not to put the numeration of the verses into the text itself; usually numbers in the margin sufficiently distinguish the verses, though possibly some sign might be given where they do not, as for example in the Nestlé New Testament. Still less is it necessary to insert small letters to give the reference to footnotes, which can bear the numbers of the verses in question. And the insets which indicate the subjects of paragraphs seem too black compared with the text. On the other hand, as one that has known and loved French from infancy, I venture to remark that the translations make a good impression. In the part containing the Psalms there is a valuable note on the translation, which lays stress on the order of the words, and especially on inversion, the good effect of which is seen in the very first verse of the Psalter :

ni dans la voie des pécheurs ne se tient,
ni au conseil des moqueurs ne s'assied.

Coming to the parts now under review, it may be well to begin where it seems necessary to stress definite disagreement. M. l'Abbé Cazelles, P.S.S., in his edition of Deuteronomy (144 pages : 7.6 x 5.6 inches, as always : 260 francs), does not appear to attribute to Moses any part at all in the actual composition of the book; it grew by degrees, until at the Babylonian exile God inspired a second edition of the work, in which cc. 1-4 and some lesser additions were made. Stress is laid upon the preponderating part played by Moses in the work; the religion and the spirit are his, and so forth. But a considerable qualification is

inserted in these remarks : 'le fond est mosaïque, ne serait-ce que par le Decalogue' (p. 15). This is not the place to draw out the arguments for the substantially Mosaic authorship ; and it may be allowed that there were some later additions of various kinds, historical, legal and so forth. But the editor does not offer any real justification for his extreme position with regard to the authorship, which of course must affect considerably any estimate of the nature and value of the book. A map is supplied in this instalment, and in others as required.

The Psalms are treated in a rather large volume (484 pages : 820 francs) by Père R. Tournay, O.P., Professor at the École Biblique, with the collaboration of M. Raymond Schwab. There recently appeared a new edition of the large commentary in the Pirot Bible, but there is plenty of room for more. Here too the introduction is long and full, running in all to 61 pages. In the late Instruction of the Biblical Commission upon the teaching of Scripture, especial emphasis is laid upon the beginnings of the human race, the messianic prophecies and the psalms ; and it is also to be noticed that students in seminaries and religious houses are to be encouraged to read the Scriptures daily, either in the Vulgate or in some more recent translation from the original texts. It is significant that there is no suggestion of using a translation from the Latin Vulgate. Such a book as this would be an ideal one to put into the hands of the students. The Pirot edition, I take it, is designed rather for teachers and more advanced students.

The Book of Joshua (92 pages : 160 francs) is contributed by Père Abel, O.P., the veteran professor at the École Biblique, whom I had the privilege of meeting when he was on an archæological expedition in Palestine. The only complaint that might be made is that he does not help us more ; the introduction is short, and notes are few. He does not consider Joshua to be the author, but rather the hero of the book (p. 7) ; the story may go back to about the end of the second millennium (p. 8). One is left in some little doubt as to its historical value (p. 12).

The Book of Wisdom (120 pages : 210 francs) has been contributed by Canon Osty, P.S.S., of the Paris Institut Catholique. It is generally agreed that it is only by a transparent literary fiction that Solomon is represented as the author ; it is written in fairly good Greek, supported by a wide vocabulary, and some knowledge of the philosophy and science of his time. The author is a Jew of Alexandria, and wrote in the first half of the first century B.C. The present writer would prefer to put the date somewhat earlier, but it would require a minute discussion to justify this view. Great emphasis is placed on the existence of God, the source and main object of all true wisdom ; Canon Osty analyses carefully the dogmatic content of the book, as well as its debt to Hellenistic thought and its influence on the New Testament. Perhaps its influence on St Paul needed rather more emphasis. Altogether the work is a

valuable contribution on a book that has perhaps received more attention in England than elsewhere.

The Book of Job, prepared by Père Larcher, O.P. (176 pages : 320 francs) is easy to analyse, and doubts will always be raised about the prologue and the intervention of Elihu, which he definitely regards as a later insertion, without questioning its inspiration and canonicity. The author Père Larcher regards as a poetical genius, a profound thinker, a religious soul, sensible also to human misery, and certainly a Jew, probably of Palestine. The book is a *chef-d'oeuvre incomparable*, probably of the first half of the fifth century B.C.

To come now to the New Testament, St Matthew's gospel has been undertaken by Père Benoît, O.P., of the École Biblique (173 pages : 310 francs). His introduction opens very rightly with a strong emphasis on the five discourses which give the gospel its distinctive character, and upon the need of taking into consideration the early tradition that St Matthew wrote his gospel in Aramaic (p. 13). St Jerome tells us that the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' was written in Aramaic, the native language of the Palestine Jews in our Lord's time, picked up after the Babylonian exile from their neighbours in Syria and Damascus. He twice calls it the *ipsum Hebraicum*, the Hebrew text itself, of St Matthew's gospel (*De vir. ill.* 3; *In Matt. ii.* 5), and mentions that he translated it into Greek and Latin (*De vir. ill.* 2); but the translations are lost. It is true that his quotations are at times very different from anything in the present Matthew text, but it seems likely enough that he quotes the most divergent and therefore most striking passages. St Matthew's original Aramaic gospel Père Benoît attributes to the apostle St Matthew and to the date A.D. 40-50; but the Greek Matthew, which would not in his view be identical with it, he assigns to A.D. 62-70. The Synoptic Problem is a very complicated one, which it is impossible to discuss adequately here, but I venture to refer to my appendix on the subject in Vol. I (New Testament) of the Westminster Version, where stress is laid upon the effect of the memory as best explaining both the likenesses and the differences in the Synoptic gospels. I have developed my view further in the Cambridge Summer School book on *The New Testament* (Burns Oates, 1938). The Biblical Commission issued its answers on St Matthew's gospel under date of 19th June 1911. Père Benoît appears to favour the 'critics' too strongly in envisaging only documentary sources. However, this does not affect to any noticeable extent the value of his translation and commentary.

Père Spicq, O.P., is already well known for his editions of the Pastoral Epistles in the *Études Bibliques* series, and of the epistles to the Corinthians in the Pirot Bible, which he now follows up suitably with the epistle to the Hebrews, on the smaller scale of this series (80 pages : 160 francs), opting for Apollos as the author of the epistle, though

remarking that he was a disciple of St Paul, *profondément marqué par sa pensée* (p. 9), and associated with him to the end of the apostle's life—this with a reference to Tit. iii, 13. It seems a good choice, but there would be less difficulty in attributing the main authorship to St Paul himself with the Biblical Commission (24th June 1914) if it were remembered that he had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts xxii, 3), and that in this epistle accordingly he could let himself go before the Jews as a Jewish rabbi, treating his subject in a manner that would not have been so intelligible to gentiles. Even in writing to the latter, however, Paul shows himself the rabbi, as one may see (e.g.) in Père Bonsirven's *Exégèse rabbinique et Exégèse paulinienne* (Paris, Beauchesne, 1939). Not that the present exegesis of the epistle is unsatisfactory, regard being had for the scale of the whole series.

Finally, the Apocalypse is undertaken by Père Boismard, O.P., of the École Biblique (92 pages: 160 francs), who proposes a new hypothesis of his own, to the effect that it is a fusion of two apocalypses, originally independent, but due to the same author, because showing the same characteristics. The letters to the seven churches were also composed by the same author, though originally separate also, and only subsequently united to the main work. The view preferred is that the Apocalypse was written by a disciple of St John, just as (it is said, p. 20) the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by a disciple of St Paul; the date would be the earlier part of Domitian's reign. The theology of the work is carefully explained; one only sign is recognized for the end of the world: it will be preceded by a general assault from the powers of evil against the Church.

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