

## REVIEWS

### SCRIPTURAL STUDIES

So impressive is the sponsoring accorded to the posthumous publication of Fr. Spencer's translation of the New Testament<sup>1</sup> that one can only feel loutish in finding as much to grumble at as to praise in the work. Yet, to offer for example such data as the following, comprised within the brief section running from John i, 47—ii, 6, as being not untypical of one's general findings: i, 45, "We have found the One of whom Moses in the Law wrote, and the prophets. . ." The quite unnecessary tangle of that. Verse 46, "'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' asked Nathaniel. 'Come and see,' replied Philip ." The snappy, cockney effect, so untrue to the spirit of the narrative. Verse 45, "Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward Him, and remarked of him . . ." That "remarked of him," how subtly it seems to miss the concrete reality by its casual, speculative tone. And then the remark that follows, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom there is no guile!"—that bracketing of "indeed" between commas has quite ruined the force of the expression. Chap. ii, v. 3, ". . . the Mother of Jesus told Him, 'They have no wine'." A hint of the cockney appears again. Verse 4, "'Woman,' Jesus answered her, 'what is there to Me and to thee.'" It is a difficult saying in the original, but no such conundrum as that. Verse 6, ". . . according to the Jewish manner of purification . . ."; whereas surely ". . . for the Jewish rites of purification" (so Moffatt, with Bauer, Loisy, Lagrange) is the more likely sense, etc.

Nevertheless one would not be disrespectful. It is a translation that it would be of great advantage to be able to consult. The author knew his Greek and Hebrew adequately—there can be no doubt of that; and he devoted to this work an enormous amount of careful labour. Only he does not seem to have possessed that marvellous combination of talent that alone could provide anything like a staple translation of the New Testament.

The editors have equipped the text with sectional captions which are not always quite felicitous. For example, "Imposters and Disasters: False Prophets and Wonders: Sabbath Fanatics Defied: Herod Agrippa Smitten by an Angel: Perishing of the Swine: Not Fickleness, But Love Changed His Plans: He Wrote from Kindness." There is a want of art displayed likewise in the external fabrication of the book, which has been made to resemble something like an old-time Matriculation manual of trigonometry.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The New Testament*, Translated into English from the Original Greek by The Very Rev. F. A. Spencer, O.P. Edited by C. J. Callan, O.P. and J. A. McHugh, O.P. The Macmillan Company, New York. £1 1s. 0d.

A book that you could easily palm off as second-hand from the start.

Another posthumous book in the present list is a work of New Testament criticism which Mgr. J. M. T. Barton as editor has very skilfully "set up" from MS. notes of the late Abbot Chapman and further equipped with some very useful introductory and incidental notes.<sup>2</sup> The Abbot appears again in a fighting rôle, taking the field now in the matter of the Synoptic Question, brandishing what he has no doubt to be the victorious formula. His robustness has always something of the air of a proving to the world that bluff hard-hitting native Englishmen are not wanting in the camp of Rome. "If Matthew uses Mark, he again extracts *little bits*, omitting large chunks between them"—the opponent sees the Sussex downs, the Yorkshire moors, etc., being cut from under his feet.

The principal thesis of the book is one of violent reaction against the Two-Document hypothesis, which the Abbot thumps his breast for having ever adhered to. Not only is Mt. not dependent on Mk., but on the contrary Mk. depends on Mt.—that is to say, *via* St. Peter's oral exposition of Matthew. St. Peter preached using Matthew as a sort of text-book, passing over whatever he could not check from his own memory—omitting therefore the bulk of the discourse material and those incidents which he had not himself witnessed, and on the other hand supplementing the narrative at those points at which his own memories recurred most vividly and urgently. St. Mark took down such a course of preaching in a shorthand account, which being published *was* the Second Gospel. One is inclined to think that the main body of Catholic scholars will remain unconverted to this particular theory of the book, preferring to hold that the relationship between these two Gospels lies substantially in their dependence upon a common system of oral catechesis, their only direct literary relationship being that which was subsequently induced by a use of Mark made in the process of turning Matthew from Aramaic into Greek. That remains to be seen, however, when the arguments of the book have had time to be fully tested by the experts. Even though its positive constructive theses should not take root, it would still remain a work of great value. It is very powerful in attack; and for the rest it is a work of great learning and of great intelligence that does not need to carry all its points in order to justify itself.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Matthew, Mark and Luke, a Study in the Order and Interrelation of the Synoptic Gospels* By the late Dom John Chapman, Fourth Abbot of Downside. Edited, with an Introduction and some additional matter by Mgr. John M. T. Barton, D.D., Lic.S.Script. Longmans; 25s.

## REVIEWS

The famous series of the *Etudes Bibliques* (established and thereafter directed by the late Père Lagrange) has recently been augmented by a work devoted to the systematic exposition of the doctrine of St. Paul which one is inclined to recommend as a quite perfect thing of its kind.<sup>3</sup> But perhaps it is slightly marred by some unnecessary repetition, caused by an ill-organised overlapping in its method. It is a manual, definitely a manual (to compare it with Prat's *St. Paul* would be like comparing a clearinghouse to a workshop, for example), but one that does not treacherously pretend to be anything else, to be a mirror of the reality. In the course of duty having to smooth down somewhat the glorious riot of the original, it manages to do so as undecievingly as a map will represent the wilds of Africa all safe and straightforward as on paper. It is essentially directed to inspiring the serious reader, and preparing him apologetically and theologically to go exploring for himself. Should be made compulsory in the higher schools of Catholic Action.

Another fine undertaking advances an important step, now that the Westminster Version has its Book of Jona.<sup>4</sup> An agreeable translation from the Hebrew, a clear, sound commentary, a well-judged introduction. Dr. Bird inclines to favour the historical interpretation of the book; but he gives a fair account of the attendant difficulties, and also of the arguments that it might seem to lead to, of the Catholic principles that make room for the rival parabolic interpretation. He dallies with the view that from chapter ii, vv. 3,7, it is to be gathered that Jona met his death in the belly of the fish and was restored to life in being restored to land. Which no doubt provides a more striking figure for the Resurrection of Christ, and for those who maintain the historic sense accords better with the physical circumstances; only it is difficult to suppose that so very ambiguous an illusion is all the reference that should then be made to so tremendous an experience of the hero. The greatness of the theme is perhaps occasionally obscured for a moment by some banal reflection.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

---

<sup>3</sup> *L'Enseignement de Saint Paul*, par François Amiot. Préface par S.E. le Cardinal Tisserant. Deux volumes in 12 de XV-337 et 264 pages. Paris, Librairie Lecoffre, J. Gabalda & Cie., 90 Rue Bonaparte. 45 fr.

<sup>4</sup> *The Westminster Version of The Sacred Scriptures: The Book of Jona*, by The Rev. T. E. Bird, D.D., Ph.D. Longman, Green & Co. 2s. 6d.