

translator, Gerda M. Blumenthal. There is a translator's blunder in the note on Zacharias, where we read of 'the Messianic title of *Germe*, signifying *Branch*', as if Zacharias had written in French! His Hebrew word, of course, was *Semach*. Similarly on 2 John, a comma suggests a misunderstanding of the original in the 'name of *Kyria*, "the elect"'. Timothy came from *Lystra*, not *Lystras*.

The biblical dates would all find general acceptance, though there might be more differences of opinion than is here suggested, thus Abraham *c.* 1850, Exodus *c.* 1250 (with footnote on page 11, *c.* 1450), the Fall of Jerusalem 587, but in the notes on Jeremiah 586, the Birth of Christ *c.* B.C. 5, the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul in 64 and 68 respectively. But in such a brief sketch such approximations are quite legitimate. The two maps at the end are useful, though somewhat clumsily drawn.

The book was originally published as *Guide Biblique* and served as a general introduction to the recent French translation of the whole Bible made by the monks of Maredsous in Belgium.

From what has been said it will be seen that this little book is a most useful source of handy background information about the Bible for the ordinary person who reads his Bible, or wants to do so, for the teacher who teaches it, for the preacher who preaches it (and here background is often helpful) and even for the cleric who may have forgotten, or never been adequately given, his course of *Introductio*.

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THE BOOK OF PSALMS. Volume One: I-LXXII. Monsignor Edward Kissane, D.D., D.LITT. (Browne and Nolan; 30s.)

The psalms say so many things that a divinely inspired body of religious poetry may be expected to say so much better than any who comment on them that such a work as the President of Maynooth's must be treated as a work of scholarship rather than of spirituality, though the ancillary function is by no means to be overlooked by any in pursuit of the main aim, the value of the psalms in the life of man with God.

Several causes—the remoteness of time, place, circumstance, imagery, the tendency to the stiffening in a framework of all thinking on matters of spirituality and revelation, familiarity, and bad translation, have robbed of much of their life and realism for myriads the amazing outpourings of the spiritual genius of the Hebrew people across the thousand years in which the psalms were being written. Dr Kissane does much to rectify this falsification, and if his work lacks incisiveness, it is because he takes an attitude prudently negative on the vexed questions of date and authorship where a positive one might be enlightening, but would probably be rash. He makes many fruitful suggestions in textual emendation, avoiding the beaten track of higher criticism, too often accepted by Catholic scholars.

An objection may be ventured: that he holds that the Israelites had a very scant conception, if any, of life after death. There are a few texts which justify this generalization, but their force is exaggerated, and leads to a misinterpretation of the Hebraic mind. It would seem rather that opinions among the Israelites were several on this gravest of all problems to men to whom the full light of revealed doctrine was withheld. Some saw the whole world of human experience in its materiality and saw nothing but the material, including the phantasms of the mind by which the immaterial is presented to flesh-girt intellects. Hence arises materialism at any stage in human society. But the perception that there is something more than matter, the certitude of a spiritual existence which could not but be personal because all that is known to man is dependent on either himself or his cause, was more rapid a conclusion for the Israelite than for any other primitive people, and a belief in another world than this was common among them, far more surely than among their neighbours, precisely because they knew the true God.

Many, if not most, cultures evolve a strong sense of an after-life, nonetheless tenaciously held because its nature is obscure, and wrapped in the forms peculiar to the mentality of each it is not easily discernible to us. The Hebrews began with this piece of natural theology, and some went beyond it, especially the prophets and mystics who perceived that the God was the God of knowledge, that the content of intellect was imperishable, and that neither the divine knower nor the known—that is, oneself—could ever cease to exist. To live in God's knowledge is to live for ever, since one can neither know or be known unless one exists. Such views are found in Psalms 38, 14—a denial of an after-life; in Psalms 15, 11, and 116, 15, its affirmation; in Psalm 48, 14-16, despite textual obscurity, the most acceptable reading would present the idea of a death-like life in Sheol, from which the psalmist is delivered; but not, for either good or evil, extermination. These are but a few instances. Dr Kissane, however, writes as if the first were typical, whereas it is exceptional. So too with the view that the Old Testament promises the blessings of earthly life, rather than of the future. Both positions seem to derogate from the fact of the supernatural life of its human authors and the distinctive qualities arising from inspiration.

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LE PROPHETE JEREMIE, sa Vie, son Oeuvre et son Temps. By Jean Steinmann. (*Lectio Divina* No. 9: Editions du Cerf, Blackfriars; n.p.)

The blurb introducing each number of the series *Lectio Divina*: 'The kind of reading, that is accompanied by thoughtful consideration of what one reads, is what is meant by *Lectio Divina*. In the patristic age and during the middle ages this kind of reading with meditation was the main