

REVIEWS

THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

DAS LEBEN JESU IM LANDE UND VOLKE ISRAEL. By Dr. Franz Michael Willam. (Herder, Freiburg i.B.)

There are many *Lives of Christ*. There are scientific or apologetic ones, such as those of Fillion, Fouard, Le Camus, Lagrange, Lebreton, de Grandmaison—each with its distinctive characteristics and answering a particular need. Then there are the 'literary' lives, like the brilliant *Storia di Christo* of Papini. Finally, there are quantities of those mediocre productions ironically called 'edifying'—*Erbauungskitsch* as we call them in Germany. What need can there be for yet another *Life*?

Yet I venture to assert that this work of Dr. Willam represents an entirely new type of a *Life of Christ*—more than that, it fills a serious gap. The German public, at any rate, has found room for it, for already 20,000 copies have been printed, and French, Italian, Spanish, Chinese and English translations are on the way.

Someone has said that the Holy Land is the 'Fifth Gospel.' It is that gospel which has hitherto lacked a satisfactory interpreter—an interpreter capable of making us read and understand its message, an interpreter who will bring home to us its most minute and most overlooked details. Dr. Willam is just such an interpreter. By making us understand this 'Fifth Gospel' he throws brilliant light on the canonical Four, elucidating passages which must for ever remain obscure unless we understand their topographical and ethnological setting. He makes us *see* and *experience* the events and the realities which the Gospels relate, so that they become no longer something distant, remote, bloodless and abstract, something divorced from life and from the world. Dr. Willam has been to Palestine, and there he has found living traces of the Gospel story, traces which are eloquent of the life and teaching of our Saviour. He has found there, after two thousand years, *His* country, *His* homeland, *His* people, *His* milieu. He has rediscovered in the people's traditions, manners, customs, folklore, in all the reality of their everyday life—unidealized and unromanticized—a picture of what this world was like when Christ lived in it, the world of which He was a member and to which He addressed His teaching, its inner spirit and mentality, as well as its external appearances. The unconditioned, supra-temporal and supra-spatial teaching of Christ loses nothing of its absolute character by being set in the environment in which it was first

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delivered; on the contrary, we are enabled to understand it all the more profoundly and see more readily its applications to our own everyday life.

This work is neither scientific nor apologetic, still less does it belong to the so-called 'edifying' category. It is neither dry nor technical, nor is it overburdened with a display of erudition. But it makes real to us the oriental world in which Christ lived; details which at first sight seem irrelevant and unimportant are suddenly shown to elucidate our understanding of His story and of Himself.

We are convinced that this work of an Austrian priest, with its numerous maps and illustrations, will—although any sort of emotional appeal is foreign to its purpose—make a profound impression on the mind of every reader, and take an important place in the religious literature of every country.

ANTON HILCKMANN.

LE SENS DU MYSTERE ET LE CLAIR-OBSCUR INTELLECTUEL. By R. P. Garrigou-Lagrange. (Desclée de Brouwer; Frs. 20.)

The Thomist revival has produced much that is by nature transient but it is possible that two of its leaders, P. Gardeil and P. Garrigou-Lagrange, will maintain a lasting influence on Catholic thought. The massive achievement of P. Gardeil may remain as antidote to facile speculation, the original sin in so many schoolmen, and the clear analysis that characterizes the writings of P. Garrigou-Lagrange may counteract the loose phrasing which can only serve as a winding-sheet to Thomism. For in retrospect the last revival in the study of St. Thomas is seen to have been in double danger. It would have been so simple to have followed in that line of least resistance—organized commonsense made easy by the use of well worn terms and neat tinkling concepts which had long served as counters in a scholastic market. Perhaps more than any other of the leaders P. Gardeil saved the movement as a whole from such surrender. Again, the new policy in controversy brought contact with very alien influences. It would have been simple for a younger school of Thomists to canonize as well as to accept the tendencies of their generation and to mistake a compromise for a distinction. Perhaps more than any other of the leaders P. Garrigou-Lagrange saved the movement as a whole from such surrender. For he has maintained for nearly thirty years the great tradition of the commentators; lucid accuracy in terminology, the power to analyse and to distinguish, a realization of the importance of the minute. It is suggestive that he should seem to move on parallel lines of speculation that can be followed back to the silver age of Thomism; the one to Cajetan, the other to John