

## REVIEWS

ABRAHAM NOTRE PÈRE. Par Joseph Lecuyer, c.s.s.p. (*L'esprit Liturgique*, 8.)

AINSI PARLAIT QOHÉLET. Par Jean Steinmann. (*Témoins de Dieu*, 15.)

PIERRE ET PAUL À ANTIOCHE ET À JERUSALEM. Par H. M. Feret, O.P.

Les Editions du Cerf, 1955; n.p.

These three volumes, of similar format (but not content), would of themselves be proof of a great growth of interest in the Scriptures. Such works would not have appeared, and did not appear, in the France of fifty years ago. The role of Scripture in the liturgy as in the living of our Catholic lives has become more apparent. It is good to think that there is a public which will read such works. We can only hope that such a public will grow and grow, and not merely remain an élite which scarce impinge upon the paganised millions all about them.

*Abraham Notre Père* is the fine fruit of a number of spiritual conferences given to the priest students at the French Seminary in Rome. The author himself calls his book a spiritual biography of Abraham, meditation on the mission and virtues of him who remains the father of our faith; and the meditation is conducted in the light of traditional Christian thought and Catholic theology. Such indeed the book proves to be, and we are given admirable chapters on the vocation of Abraham, on the journey to Canaan, Abraham in Egypt, Melchisedech, faith which justifies, etc. Particularly pleasing are the frequent and apt references to passages in the Fathers, Councils, or works of St Thomas. All through we are convinced that the author is fully in step with the mind of the Church, and that he is helping us to acquire a deeper appreciation of the stories of the Patriarch Abraham, the friend of God who has meant so much in the designs of God. Could we but know and understand more about Abraham, then we should have ground for friendship with God. The book is admirably constructed and well rounded off with indexes of Bible texts, of authors cited and of liturgical passages.

*Ainsi Parlait Qohéleth* is a lively presentation of that book of the Bible better known to English readers as Ecclesiastes or The Preacher. Ecclesiastes is as fascinating as it is enigmatic. So the present work pilots us through the more than usually strange problems of authorship, date and composition, in an engaging way that savours not at all of the manual. Rather is it an immensely readable biography of an unknown author together with an analysis of a work which is at once quixotic and the inspired Word of God. We are presented with a sketch

of the Jewish milieu which might have produced Ecclesiastes, and suggestions about the age-old common stores of philosophical ideals, whether Babylonian, Egyptian or Hellenic—to all of which Jerusalem jewry would not have been so closed as is commonly thought. Our author stresses the phrase 'all things under the sun', for this would represent the limited spiritual horizon of the Preacher who is very much concerned with *this* life and only seems to sense a vague sheol beyond. Be that as it may, we are shown how Ecclesiastes represents the highly personal reflections of an old man who has seen and known and had to swallow much. Our present book reads better than many a novel; we can hardly help being happily driven to read Ecclesiastes again—than which there is no better praise for an introductory book of this kind.

*Pierre et Paul à Antioche et à Jerusalem* has as subtitle *Le 'conflit' des deux Apôtres*. That there was a conflict is indisputable (cf. Gal. 2, 11 & 14), but we are taken aback when our author reads a bitter thrust of St Peter into '... our dear brother Paul ... in all his letters, in which there are some things difficult to understand' (2 Peter 3, 16). Our confidence in the work is somewhat restored when the author turns to a fresh and business-like examination of the texts at issue, mostly in the wake of Lagrange. The pages on the *genre littéraire* of Acts (pp. 55-57) have a quality of newness, and seem valuable. The author then discusses the warp and woof of events which led to the common triumph of both St Peter and St Paul. There were not two victories but one, which was really that of their and our Lord Jesus Christ.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

JOAN—DAUGHTER OF GOD. A Psychological Study. By Mary Angela Jeeves. (A. H. Stockwell Ltd.; 9s. 6d.)

Joan came from the forest-clad hills of the Vosges and always rejoiced in the beauty of nature and the freedom of the open air. Her love of religion and quietude was testified to by parish priests, girl friends and other peasants. Her family was poor but not destitute, and she was often at daily Mass and always punctual. She loved bright clothes and enjoyed the fine dresses, seen later at Court. It is noteworthy that the typical colour of the village dresses at Domremy was red, and the author remarks that it is a principle of human life that matter *must* be used in the service of man, who receives all his knowledge through the five senses; and that the family and place from which we are sprung must contribute largely to the kind of person we are and the type of sanctity which we develop. It depends on us whether we respond to the challenge of holiness or merely reproduce the more or less monotonous round of material life in which most of us are born.