

Pastorals and Hebrews are not by Paul, nor Apocalypse by John, etc., and an assumption as a matter of course that much biblical narrative is no more than charming legend, and that the 'so-called messianic interpretation (of e.g. Is. 53) is untenable' (p. 174), etc. In fact, this is a skilful popularisation of the Bible on a purely literary and non-Christian basis, it being supposed that the 'common reader' is interested in reading and not in praying, in literature and not much in religion. But mention should be made of the good and original dramatic and psychological analysis of the book of Job, with the interesting suggestion of Job's 'unorthodoxy' *vis-à-vis* the current Jewish view of evil (p. 190-204). Similarly the notion of the Canticle, Psalms, and Proverbs as 'anthologies' is valuable (p. 205-222). One cannot help calling to mind the different approach of a similar book, written from a Catholic standpoint, also by a woman who is not a trained Scripturist, Miss Monro, who helps us towards 'Enjoying the New Testament' not merely as literature but as God's word, and who is said (I hope truly) to be preparing a sister volume on the Old Testament.

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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST PETER. By E. G. Selwyn. (Macmillan, 25s.)

It is consoling to find that the first notable biblical book of 1946 (it appeared in January) is a genuine flower of that noble Cambridge tradition of Anglican exegesis, of which the names of Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort, Swete, Hatch, and Dr Selwyn's own father are the chief glories, whose scholarship is undisputed and whose roots in fact lie in the background of the Catholic tradition. For it is in virtue of this tradition, which begins in New Testament and early patristic times, that the author, starting with a perfectly scholarly examination of linguistic, biblical, patristic, and historical evidence, continuing through exact critical and theological reasoning, and inspired with a true love of our Lord and devotion to St Peter, arrives at an orthodox position entirely consonant with Catholic teaching.

This is a definitive commentary. The Epistle has been a life-interest of the author, and here we have the mature results of years of study. The first 115 pages are a study of the authorship, occasion, date and theological argument of the Epistle. The next 130 pages are a fully detailed commentary on the Greek text. The following 66 pages are devoted to additional exegetical notes on particular passages. The remaining 152 pages consist of two essays: on Christ's *descensus ad inferos*, and on a literary comparison of I Peter with other Epistles. At the end is a 20-page note by Dr Daube on linguistic parallels in Rabbinic literature.

It would be utterly presumptuous in a review like the present even to pretend to appraise the value of the investigations and conclusions expounded in a commentary of this calibre. It will be more useful to take a few obvious questions that the general reader would want to put to a commentator, and indicate Dr Selwyn's conclusions. For instance, was Peter the author, and if so, what was the position

of Silvanus? The Epistle, he holds, is certainly by Peter, and the parallel with Peter's words in *Acts* and echoes from the Gospel (especially Mark, the 'Petrine' Gospel) bear this out (pp. 27-31, 228). It was drafted by Silvanus (5, 12, 'through Silvanus . . . I have written'), who had also been joint author with Paul in I and II Thessalonians, which explains both the so-called Pauline manner of I Peter and the classicism of the Greek. The date of the Epistle is nailed down to 63-64, i.e. between the petty persecutions resulting in the martyrdom of James the Less, and the Neronian persecution (p. 60 sq.). Babylon in 5, 13 of course stands for Rome. Was the letter addressed to Jewish or Gentile Christians? There are, after all, opposing patristic opinions, and Dr Selwyn holds that the communities were mixed, as often in the first century: hence the indications to support both views (p. 42 sq.). There is much study of the supposed catechetical forms underlying the New Testament and the Epistles in particular, including the *Verba Christi* (identified with Q) (p. 18, 23 and Essay II). The theology of the Epistle is fully expounded: St Peter's theology of the Church, with membership through Baptism, is summed up in the phrase 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus' (p. 82); and the 'spiritual sacrifices' (2, 5) receive (*contra* many of the older school) a eucharistic interpretation: 'The sacrifices offered by the priestly body, the Church, are intimately connected with the atoning work of Christ' (p. 294-5). 'The Christology of the Epistle contains the roots of later Catholic doctrine' (p. 249), and the central ethical teaching of the Epistle is the ideal of *imitatio Christi*, especially his meekness: which 'trait of all others in the character of our Lord is dear to St Peter . . . who had himself witnessed it' (p. 91): this is to be the example to Christians in suffering (2, 21). Of all the other points we might examine, we should mention Christ's *descensus ad inferos* in 3, 19, 'He preached to those spirits that were in prison'. Patristic exegesis is divided: (a) the liberation of the saints of the Old Testament from Limbo (Knox's New Testament in a note calls this interpretation 'certain', and most commentaries take that view, though in the second century this text was not used in support of the doctrine), and (b) the conquest of the 'archetypal spirits of evil'. Dr Selwyn inclines to the latter view. (Essay I, esp. p. 353-4).

The Catholic student will search the bibliography in vain for a Catholic author, but we might ask what outstanding book he would find there. Catholics can therefore only be deeply grateful for the present commentary.

Lastly we should like to observe that this book is a valuable indication of the general return to orthodoxy in the biblical world, a return which will show to Catholics the wisdom of the Church in having been slow to accept the conclusions of the advanced criticism of 50 years ago, a slowness which some may have found irksome, but which is now being justified by the orthodoxy of such pre-eminent scholars of today.

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