

THE EXILIC AGE. By C. F. Whitley. (Longmans; 16s.)

'To outline the historical and intellectual movements of the sixth century, and to interpret the work of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah in relation to such movements': such is Dr Whitley's stated purpose. He gives the impression of having been inspired by H. and H. A. Frankfort's *Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (on which indeed he heavily relies), and of intending to examine a single significant epoch in the history of Hebrew thought with the same critical methods which they have used for its entire range.

For the political history of the period the author selects and appraises his sources shrewdly enough, though he barely refers to the recently discovered and exceedingly important 'New Babylonian Chronicle'. But the information he provides on the intellectual movements of the period is really too meagre to throw much additional light on the thought of the great exilic prophets with whom he is concerned. Most of the questions and difficulties which have been raised with regard to these prophets are ably discussed, and here again the author's choice and handling of sources is able.

Throughout the book Dr Whitley appears to be working around and towards such ideas as 'emancipation of the individual from the bonds of organized religion', 'personal fellowship with God', and 'the religion of the spirit'. Taken in isolation, these ideas remind one rather of the England of the nineteenth century A.D. than of the Israel of the sixth century B.C. In fact his preoccupations in this one direction seem to have led the author to neglect certain equally vital concepts in another: those of community, common cultus, priesthood, and law, which, especially in Ezekiel, were at this period so greatly deepened and transformed. Without these the picture seems decidedly one-sided and unbalanced, and one cannot help wondering whether the author's judgment has not been unduly swayed by his personal predilections.

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

NINE SERMONS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE ON THE PSALMS. Translated and introduced by Edmund Hill, O.P. (Longmans; 18s.)

Fr Hill has chosen the group of Augustine's sermons on the psalms beginning with that on psalm 18 and ending with the small gem of a treatise on grace, faith and works, the sermon on psalm 31. The sermons have no more and no less unity about them than any similar group chosen from Augustine's popular preaching might have. In this, perhaps, lies the value of this collection, since it gives us a representative if not wholly random sample of Augustine's preaching, and of his approach to Scripture in a homiletic setting.

This is not to say that the collection lacks any coherence whatsoever.

It has running through it the thread which is very characteristic of much of Augustine's preaching, and especially of his sermons on the psalms: the preoccupation with the 'whole Christ', the life of the Church as united to her exalted head. This emphasis is inherent in Augustine's preference for approaching the psalms as the common public prayer of the Church, of Christ praying in his Body, rather than as scriptural texts to be expounded as such. As he says in his first sermon on psalm 30 (quoted from the present translation),

so then Christ is speaking here in the prophet. I say it boldly, Christ is speaking. He is going to say some things in this psalm which it would seem cannot possibly fit Christ, either as our glorious head in heaven—let alone as the Word of God—or even as having the form of a servant, the form which he took of the Virgin. And yet it is Christ speaking, because Christ lives in his members (p. 111).

Augustine, however, often takes this approach further: he will time and again go to almost any lengths so to interpret the psalm-text as to make it not merely an utterance of Christ in his Body, but also an utterance *about* Christ, either as God or as man—in humiliation or in glory—or as living in his Body, united to his bride, the Church. This often leads him so to distort the clear meaning of the text that a modern reader cannot help feeling disconcerted by the artificiality of some of his comments. This is exemplified, for instance, in his comments on the verse 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands' in psalm 18. He takes 'the glory of God' to mean the only-begotten Son full of grace and truth, taking up the verbal echo in John 1, 14, the heavens being 'the holy men who carry Christ abroad into the world' (p. 35). This kind of procedure, is even more disconcerting when applied to a manifestly messianic psalm, like psalm 21, where much of the imagery is directly applicable to the Passion, but is nevertheless resolutely by-passed. For instance,

'My heart has become like melting wax in my belly.' His belly means the weak parts of his body, the shaky members of his Church; there are no hard bones in the belly. And his heart is wisdom, locked up and frozen in the Scriptures. No one understood the Scriptures until the Lord was crucified, and then they melted like wax in his belly, so that even the weak could understand them. (p. 52.)

Fr Hill's introduction does much to help us place Augustine's approach in the setting of contemporary procedure and expectations, and indeed such dexterous manipulation would have delighted many of Augustine's listeners. But Fr Hill is a little too indiscriminate in his defence of Augustine's approach to the Scriptures.

His translation is throughout excellent, lively, clear and, where I have compared it with the original text, astonishingly accurate. On occasions Fr Hill is ensnared by his greatest virtue: the informality of his rendering sometimes leads to an undue banality, as for instance in his talk of 'bad lads' and 'good lads' (p. 66) in a passage where Augustine is in fact being almost unusually impersonal, almost ritualistic. His rendering of *beatus* by 'lucky' (p. 156) is, in some cases, inappropriate in the context. In general, however, Fr Hill's chattiness serves him well, and the result is a translation which brings out well the familiarity of Augustine's style in preaching.

R. A. MARKUS

THE CISTERCIAN HERITAGE. By Louis Bouyer. Translated by Elizabeth Livingstone. (Mowbrays; 22s. 6d.)

In his appendix on William of St Thierry in *The Mystical Theology of St Bernard*, Etienne Gilson looked forward to the time when the new Cistercian Review, *Collectanea*, would provide us with a serious contribution to Cistercian studies. This hope has not yet, perhaps, been realized; and all we have been given, so far, is a series of rather conventional articles. Gilson's own appendix on William, Dechanet's *Guillaume de St Thierry, l'homme et son oeuvre*, and Dumontier's *St Bernard et la Bible* are still landmarks. The central theme which has emerged is, as Gilson prophesied, the importance of William of St Thierry, and it is clear that Cistercian studies will centre on research into William as the great Cistercian theologian.

Père Bouyer here offers us a work of enthusiasm blended with scholarship. Enthusiasm, admittedly, is not without its dangers; but the fact remains that, in a mine as undeveloped as the Cistercian one, enthusiasm is as necessary as scholarship. It is futile for pundits to lay down party lines at this stage. What we need is discussion, hypotheses, and suggestions of potential lines of development. It is moreover vitally important to approach the Cistercian fathers from a twelfth-century point of view, and not to diagnose their mystique through the eyes of the Spanish Carmelites or St Francis of Sales.

Père Bouyer's book, like Dumontier's, tends to be a trifle vague because it does not quite accept at the outset the central importance of William. It offers us first Bernard, then William, then Aelred, placing beside them the lesser figures of Isaac of Stella and Guerric of Igny. He offers us in fact the somewhat misleading picture of a school of thought whereas in fact each of these figures is far more an individual than a master or a disciple. What is common to their thought is principally due to the common cultural background and the Benedictine ascesis of their religious life. However, their individuality does