

of the Bible (what it is, how it came to be written, what demands it makes on us and how we must read it) which this excellent book will give them.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

LES PSAUMES. Commentés par La Bible. Psalms 1-50. Par Pierre Guichou. (Editions du Cerf.)

The Church is Christ's body, its members are the completion of its head (Eph. i, 23). The Church is Christ in the world, and in its members it continues through the centuries Christ's prayer. When the members adore, praise and thank the Father it is still Christ praying to the Father in them. In this way, as in all its work, it builds up Christ's body till he be filled 'all in all'. The purpose of this book is to equip Christ's members for this prayer-life in union with their head.

The author begins with the postulate that the Church should use the formulae consecrated by Christ himself, namely the Psalms. His idea is to extract the prayer-element in its Old Testament context and then to re-think and to re-pray it in New Testament terms and in New Testament relationship with God. In this way he makes of the New Testament a commentary upon the Old Testament. How thoroughly this is done is clear, for instance, from the fact that he uses more than twenty quotations (including citations from all four Gospels, Acts and several Epistles) to develop the thought of the short Psalm 6. There is nothing far-fetched or forced, ideas are developed naturally in the fuller light of the New Testament. The Old Testament plant produces the New Testament flower.

The book is not intended to take the place of a commentary. Introductory matter is kept to a minimum and the reader who wishes for more is referred to the standard commentaries. For the text of the Psalms (which is not printed out in the book) the reader is referred to the French of the Jerusalem Bible, but any translation will serve the purpose.

The method of exposition is uniform: first of all a literal explanation of the Psalm in its original setting, and then, under separate headings and in separate sections, the Psalm is given its New Testament application. For instance, in Psalm 3 the faith of the persecuted psalmist is triumphant over temptation coming from faint-hearted friends to lose trust in God. The author gives three further applications: the psalm is first made a prayer for the victims of modern social injustice, it is then applied to the sufferers from either persecution from without or spiritual anguish from within.

The author covers Psalms 1-50. I know of no better meditation book on the Psalms and of none that helps us to pray the Psalms so well. May it soon be translated into English!

RICHARD J. FOSTER

THE TWO-EDGED SWORD. By J. L. McKenzie, S.J. (Bruce, Milwaukee; \$4.50.)

'The Intelligent Modern Man's Guide to the Old Testament' would be a just sub-title for this supremely competent book. The author succeeds admirably in translating scriptural modes of thought into modern categories. He has at his command all the technique of a most persuasive debater. Particularly effective is his chapter on revelation and the 'otherness' of the God of the Hebrews, and his elaboration of a most useful distinction between history and story.

But the critical reader may perhaps gradually begin to feel a certain reserve, such as a skilful debater is always liable to build up against himself; a feeling, hard to justify in detail, that it is all a little too neat to be true, that reality is being tailored slightly to fit this smart suit of clothes. The author says excellently that 'we cannot say that the thoughts are from God, the language from man; for God uses both the thoughts and the language of the man through whom he writes'. But later on he says, 'it is, we think, sufficiently clear that the details of the account (of creation) are the work of the creative imagination, not of divine revelation'. This can of course be piously interpreted without difficulty to square with the former accurate statement of biblical inspiration. Yet the dichotomy has been introduced, the way is open for us to treat the details of any passage as so much literary decoration contributed by the writer with no direct relevance to the divine revelation. We are absolved from the effort of trying to discern a divine meaning even in the details, to grasp revelation through the very words of Scripture; from the effort, that is, which constituted for the patristic tradition the very essence of exegetical labour.

Indeed, the one serious limitation of this book is that the author can really find no room at all in his armoury for that typological or allegorical method which dominated Christian exegesis for so long. This means that there is a whole authentic line of the Church's tradition which his interpretation fails to assimilate. He is aware himself that he is liable to be criticized on this score. Allegory (or typology) opens the door to fantasy, he fears; but it may well be fantasy disciplined by tradition, and playing over a field clearly demarcated by tradition. We cannot nowadays, he declares, seriously treat Old Testament exegesis as a treasure-hunt for clues of Christ; but these are very loaded terms.