

the common carelessness of the American printer in dividing words at line-ends, are a little trying to the English reader, but the translation fully shares Fr Poelman's invigorating enthusiasm and sound piety. The many people who are now interested in the great 'types' and themes of the Bible as a whole will find every page suggesting profound ideas and throwing new light on many passages, both well-known and little-known, in the Scriptures.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

GUIDE TO THE BIBLE. By the Monks of Maredsous. (Sands; paper cover, 3s. 6d.)

This is an extremely good three-and-sixpenceworth. It should be of considerable service to almost anyone. It is an extremely brief statement of most of the salient facts in what in the schools is called an *Introductio Generalis* and *Introductio Specialis* to the Bible.

It opens with two pages on the Catholic attitude to the Bible according to the great Encyclicals. A three-page History from Abraham to A.D. 70 follows, with a useful table of 'Great Dates', giving thirty-five key dates. Six pages describe the general lay-out of the whole Bible. The rest of the book then works through the Bible, giving very brief and concise notes on the authorship and date of composition, and the content and general theme of each book. In each section, of particular value to the beginner (especially in the Old Testament), is a short list of items for selected readings which should not be missed. This selection is extremely well done. Tobias, Judith and Esther are included as 'episodic narratives' among the historical books, and are followed by Machabees. The rest of the notes follow the order of the Catholic Bible, except in the notes on the Epistles of St Paul.

The statements on authorship and date are generally reliable, and that dealing with the Pentateuch is wisely non-committal ('. . . the original old Mosaic part underwent a series of changes and enrichments . . .'). Similarly for the Gospels (p. 80), a solution of the Synoptic Problem is merely hinted at on the lines of Greek Matthew making use of Mark. Isaias presents a 'still unsolved question', and the traditional view of the unity of the book is given, together with the opinion that the later chapters were written by 'one or two unknown prophets'. No mention is made of a *via media* according to which these rewrote older Isaian material. With regard to dates of composition the reader is sometimes peremptorily ordered to accept a date that can only be hypothetical: thus, Samuel 'must have been written after 622', or, Abdias 'must be assigned to the period of the Exile', or, Aggeus 'must have been written by a disciple', but these things, together with the phrases 'the Book of the Judges' and 'Matthew, whose real name was Levi', may be due to an imperfect knowledge of either English or French usage on the part of the

translator, Gerda M. Blumenthal. There is a translator's blunder in the note on Zacharias, where we read of 'the Messianic title of *Germe*, signifying *Branch*', as if Zacharias had written in French! His Hebrew word, of course, was *Semach*. Similarly on 2 John, a comma suggests a misunderstanding of the original in the 'name of *Kyria*, "the elect"'. Timothy came from *Lystra*, not *Lystras*.

The biblical dates would all find general acceptance, though there might be more differences of opinion than is here suggested, thus Abraham *c.* 1850, Exodus *c.* 1250 (with footnote on page 11, *c.* 1450), the Fall of Jerusalem 587, but in the notes on Jeremiah 586, the Birth of Christ *c.* B.C. 5, the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul in 64 and 68 respectively. But in such a brief sketch such approximations are quite legitimate. The two maps at the end are useful, though somewhat clumsily drawn.

The book was originally published as *Guide Biblique* and served as a general introduction to the recent French translation of the whole Bible made by the monks of Maredsous in Belgium.

From what has been said it will be seen that this little book is a most useful source of handy background information about the Bible for the ordinary person who reads his Bible, or wants to do so, for the teacher who teaches it, for the preacher who preaches it (and here background is often helpful) and even for the cleric who may have forgotten, or never been adequately given, his course of *Introductio*.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS. Volume One: I-LXXII. Monsignor Edward Kissane, D.D., D.LITT. (Browne and Nolan; 30s.)

The psalms say so many things that a divinely inspired body of religious poetry may be expected to say so much better than any who comment on them that such a work as the President of Maynooth's must be treated as a work of scholarship rather than of spirituality, though the ancillary function is by no means to be overlooked by any in pursuit of the main aim, the value of the psalms in the life of man with God.

Several causes—the remoteness of time, place, circumstance, imagery, the tendency to the stiffening in a framework of all thinking on matters of spirituality and revelation, familiarity, and bad translation, have robbed of much of their life and realism for myriads the amazing outpourings of the spiritual genius of the Hebrew people across the thousand years in which the psalms were being written. Dr Kissane does much to rectify this falsification, and if his work lacks incisiveness, it is because he takes an attitude prudently negative on the vexed questions of date and authorship where a positive one might be enlightening, but would probably be rash. He makes many fruitful suggestions in textual emendation, avoiding the beaten track of higher criticism, too often accepted by Catholic scholars.