

It seems eminently theological to treat exegesis as an effort to read the signs, to find and understand as many as possible of what St Augustine liked to call sacraments of Christ lurking in the letter of Holy Scripture.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE BRIDGE: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies. Vol. I and II.

Edited by John M. Oesterreicher. (Pantheon Books Inc.; \$3.95.)

The purpose of *The Bridge*, according to the statement of the Editor and his collaborators, is 'to serve the dialogue between Christians and Jews'. Since this dialogue is, we consider, of major theological importance (important to theology as a vital activity, moulding the Church's life here and now), we hope fervently that Fr Oesterreicher will be successful in his purpose. The two volumes before us give a fair promise that he will.

What is especially encouraging is that the second volume does appear to be a marked improvement on the first. The field covered in both volumes is a wide one. There are contributions on the Scriptures, informative articles on *causes célèbres* affecting the Jews, such as the Dreyfus affair and the Finaly scandal, essays on literary and artistic subjects germane to the theme of *The Bridge*—worthy of special mention are an essay on 'Shylock: the Quality of Justice', and on 'Marc Chagall, Painter of the Crucified'—brief descriptions of features of Jewish rites and worship, and some excellent book reviews. But in the first volume the nobility of the master idea seems to have so awed some of the contributors, that they deemed it necessary to primp out their style with furbelows which prove only too detrimental to their matter, whose substance is aerated to the point of evanescence. Whether the Editor has exercised a sterner discipline over the contributors to the second volume, or has been able to show more discrimination, we do not know, but at any rate this defect has been largely purged out of it.

It would seem that *The Bridge* is intended for a wide public of the educated Catholic laity, and that one of its prime functions is to act as a prophylactic against the virus of anti-Semitism, from which sad experience teaches us that the Church of God is by no means immune. It is realist in that it seems to pre-suppose a lower level of biblical and theological culture than of literary education. Perhaps, indeed, it is just a little too realist. One would like to see the Editor inviting his illustrious contributors on biblical and theological topics to offer, in suitable quantities, some portions of rather stronger meat, of more detailed and specialist scholarship.

The Editor, in the 'Word of Thanks' which introduces the second

volume, reiterates the character of *The Bridge* as a specifically Catholic undertaking, and seems to decline for that reason the suggestion that he should make room in it for contributions from Jewish writers. 'We could not in conscience', he says, 'open our pages to a dispute on the basic tenets of our faith.' But while it would doubtless be undesirable to make *The Bridge* a mere vehicle of controversy, like the correspondence columns of a newspaper, it is to be hoped that future volumes will contain papers by Jews about things Jewish. For not only could this be most useful for the Catholic readers of these Yearbooks, it would also be doing something to remedy a situation noted and regretted by Fr J. E. Bruns in two of his penetrating book reviews; the fact that the majority of Jewish writers judge and condemn Christianity by its Protestant, and in particular liberal Protestant, forms. If some of these writers were invited to contribute to *The Bridge*, it would be a means of directing their attention to Christianity in its authentic, that is its Catholic form, and thus of confronting them with it not as the anti-thesis but the fulfilment of authentic, orthodox, Judaism.

These two tentative suggestions are not meant in any way as a criticism of Fr Oesterreicher's methods in the two volumes before us. But he has started something of such value and so many possibilities, that its future development is a matter of keen interest. We look forward to seeing more of these handsomely produced books, and to finding their contents of an ever higher quality.

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ORIGEN: COMMENTARY AND HOMILIES ON THE SONG OF SONGS. Tr. by R. P. Lawson. (A.C.W. Vol. XXVI: Longmans; 21s.)

This is another valuable contribution to this valuable series of patristic translations. The choice of work is judicious, presenting the reader with Origen not only at his best, but at his most typical; perhaps also at his most influential, for here we find the master images and ideas that have governed the Church's mystical tradition ever since. Not that Origen was the *fons et origo* of this tradition; but he is perhaps its earliest witness outside Scripture, and there can be little doubt that he stamped upon it the mark of his own peculiar genius.

The translation reads easily on the whole, better than a number of others which have already appeared in the series. But it is not entirely free from mistranslation, and in particular there is one rather serious error that should be pointed out. On page 108 Origen is made to say, in substance, that just as the Gentile Church had been unbelieving, and then had received mercy through the unbelief of the Jews, so one day Israel, which is now unbelieving, will receive mercy through the