

THE BIBLE IN FRANCE

Since 1950 more than 300,000 Catholic Bibles have been sold in four new French translations.

The Jerusalem Bible takes first place, both on account of the quality of the translation and because of the importance of its introductions, as readers of *Scripture* are already aware from the reviews of this Bible which have appeared in its pages. But it is expensive. The publishers intend to bring out an edition in one or two volumes, with introductions and shorter notes, once the whole Bible has been issued in its present form. One would wish that in this future "popular" edition the notes should be touched up so that the lay reader might be furnished with material of a theological and spiritual character—material which is somewhat lacking in some of the fascicules of the present edition.

The Maredsous Bible, very well produced, both in the large and small editions, has also good introductions¹ and sober and useful notes.

The Lille Bible, or *Cardinal Liénart's Bible*, is the most widely circulated of recent editions. It has adopted the translation of the Pirot-Clamer *Commentary*. Its literary value is uneven and the small print may be trying for some people. But the translation is well done. A glossary and chronological tables supplement the brief notes, and short introductions prepare the reader to understand the books of the Bible. Its price is very modest, about 700 francs.

The success of these Bibles has induced the publishers of the well-known *Crampon Bible* to bring it up to date and reduce its price from 1,800 to 1,260 francs. It has been completely revised, and the revision has been specially successful in the Sapiential Books and the Prophets. The new "Crampon" has numerous notes and well-informed introductions. Unfortunately the summaries at the beginning of each section, which were so useful, do not appear in the new edition.

This widespread circulation of the Bible raises serious problems for the clergy as well as for the faithful. The present taste for Bible-reading could involve a real danger, if it were not accompanied by an effort at genuine and methodical instruction. Hence it is that various other publications have appeared aiming at precisely this.

For the faithful in general, the Ligue Catholique de l'Évangile has already organised, in several dioceses, Bible Exhibitions where visitors may see and understand everything concerning the Scriptures themselves, as well as their geographical, historical and cultural background.

The same society has, since 1951, been publishing the *Cahiers*

¹ Cf. *Scripture*, v (1952), pp. 76-7.

Evangelies.¹ This pleasing quarterly review, costing only 380 francs a year, studies a particular theme in each number, and in a simple, living way, usually well adapted to the needs of the spiritual life. Here are some of the titles: "How to read the Bible" (No. 1), "Bible and Gospel" (No. 2), "The prophets and Christ" (Nos. 3 and 4), "The God of the Poor" (Nos. 5 and 9), "Paul and his life" (No. 7).

From a different point of view, a parish priest of the diocese of Dijon² has begun to publish a series of commentaries, popular, simple, without any scientific apparatus, *Pas à pas avec la Bible*. Three of the forty fascicules planned have already appeared, namely, Introduction, *Genesis*, *Apocalypse*. The editor of the series has secured the services of a number of reputable exegetes. At the same time he has managed to steer clear of the more technical problems and give in a simple and vivid manner the essentials which allow the ordinary faithful to read their Bible with spiritual profit. These little books, clearly written, short, and of modest price, will be highly useful to Catholics in general.

The faithful will always, however, stand in need of advice and direction from their priests; the kind of instruction and inspiration which they would naturally look for in those trained in theology and the spiritual doctrine and whose lives are wholly dedicated to their Master. Can it be said that the French clergy adequately respond to this expectation? Certainly the means are there for them to develop, or, it may be, to take up once more, the studies which occupied them in the Seminary.

There are, first, excellent introductions, among which one may single out for mention *Aux sources bibliques*, by the Abbé Joly,³ a small practical volume which puts the Sacred Books in their historical setting and brings out well the significance of the events and personages of the Old Testament, their characteristic features and their Messianic importance.

Problèmes d'Ancien Testament, by A. Gelin,⁴ deals specially with the matter of Biblical inerrancy, sets out and comments on the various directives issued by Rome on this matter, especially such as concern the different senses of Scripture, the relation of the Bible to science, literary forms.

A review recently appeared in *Scripture* of Dom. C. Charlier's work,⁵ which is an excellent aid to the reading of the Bible. Without

¹ *Cahiers bibliques "Evangile"*, 2 rue de la Planche, Paris, (7^e).

² Pierre Israël, La Roche-en-Brénil (Côte-d'or).

³ *Aux sources bibliques*. Guide de lecture de l'A.T. Fleurus, Paris, 1951. 300 fr.

⁴ A. Gelin, P.S.S., *Problèmes d'Ancien Testament*. Vitte, Paris-Lyon, 1952. 240 fr.

⁵ *La Lecture chrétienne de la Bible*, Maredsous 1950. 495 fr. Cf. *Scripture*, v (1952), p. 77.

any technical apparatus (unfortunately without references either) it deals with the traditional questions of introduction, and above all endeavours consistently to show in what spirit a Christian should approach the Sacred Books.

Besides the above works, one should also mention the numerous articles on the Bible which are to be found mostly in periodicals for the clergy, such as *Ami du clergé*, *Vie spirituelle*, *Maison Dieu*, *Nouvelle revue théologique*, *Lumière et vie* and many others. Special mention should be made of *Cahiers sioniens*, which have devoted a special number to *Abraham Father of Believers* (June 1951) and another by Père Démann to *The Christian Catechesis and the People of the Bible* (Dec. 1952).¹

Recently the monks of Maredsous, under the patronage of Belgian, Canadian and French Cardinals and Bishops, have begun publication of a new quarterly review "de doctrine de spiritualité et de pastorale biblique", *Bible et vie chrétienne*.² The first number appeared in April 1953. The general level of the review appears to be between the *Revue biblique* and the *Cahiers Evangiles*: that is to say, it is designed in the first place for priests engaged in the ministry who have to put their people in sure touch with the Word of God.

Finally, one may say that Biblical Days and Sessions become more and more frequent—as for example during priests' retreats—and one can only thank God for inspiring so great a fund of goodwill and ask Him for grace to remain always faithful to His Word and to His Will.

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¹ *Cahiers sioniens*, 68 rue N.-D. des Champs. Paris-(6^e). "Abraham père des croyants", préface de S.E. le Cardinal Tisserant (300 fr.). "La Catéchèse chrétienne et le peuple de la Bible", préface de S.E. le Cardinal Saliège (450 fr.).

² Casterman, Paris (abonnement 800 fr.), and Blackwell, Oxford, £1.