

## REVIEWS

JÉRÉMIE. By Albert Gelin. *Temoins de Dieu*, no. 13. (Cerf, Blackfriars; n.p.)

Each volume of this series is devoted to a biblical figure who is presented as a 'witness to God' in his period of the world's history. These are biographies, but not only in the sense of examining and recording the events in a life, for the person's writings, sayings and actions are studied upon the background of contemporary events, to present a picture of the development of his thought and ideas and an assessment of his influence upon both his own and succeeding generations. All through, the series has secured the services of first-class scholars and specialists in the period. It is connected with the serial publication by the same House (which is associated with the French Dominicans) of the new translation of the Bible from the original texts, which has come to be known as the *Bible de Jerusalem* and which has earned the praise of scholars everywhere.

M. l'Abbé Gelin, a Sulpician and a lecturer at the Faculté de Lyons, has built this biography (a 'psychological biography', he calls it) upon the fruits of scholars' researches during the past fifty years. Studies on Jeremias have moved a long way since the 'radical' criticism of Duhm in 1901, and M. Gelin has made no small contribution to them.

The vivid character of Jeremias comes most strikingly to life in this book. He lived through what was both politically and religiously one of the stormiest periods in Old Testament history, and his message is therefore not without significance in the confused period of our own civilisation. Jeremias was in Jerusalem at the time of King Josias's great religious reform in 621; he saw the decline that followed; he remained during the calamity of 587-586, when the city was captured by the Babylonians and many of its people deported; he was still there during the occupation by the foreign army under the 'puppet government' of Godolias; he was at hand when Godolias was murdered by a group of 'partisans'; he was dragged off to Egypt against his will by the partisans who fled there to avoid reprisals. We follow Jeremias through these events, watching his reactions, his advice, his encouragements or denunciations: we see him helping Josias's good work, denouncing those who later overturned it, warning the people of the scourge that was to come, strengthening them when it came, and finally resolutely opposing the unruly partisans whose activity only brought further ruin on the land and eventually silenced even the voice of the prophet. The end of the story is veiled in legend, and this is glanced at in the final chapter: the story in 2 Macc. 2, 1-8 is dismissed among the legends that

grew up about the prophet, and the attribution of the Lamentations to him is also explained. The rabbinic legend that Jeremias would return is also investigated and offered as an explanation of 'Art thou *the prophet*' in John 1, 21 (cf. Matt. 16, 14). But the growth of these legends is only an indication of the power of the personality of the prophet.

The present writer, having a special interest in the Minor Prophets, has had one small disappointment. At certain periods of Jeremias's tempestuous life, he had contemporaries in prophecy, and there would be interesting contrasts in treatment, or parallels. Habacuc is indeed mentioned once (p. 83) to contrast his reaction with that of Jeremias to evil and sin in the world, but further connections and comparisons with this prophet of one brief phase of the period (between Josias, 609, and the Babylonian invasions, 602) would have been valuable. Sophonias is not mentioned at all, yet he was probably one of the preachers of Josias's reform (621) together with Jeremias. Nor is the vigorous prophet Nahum mentioned, whose wild denunciations of Assyria are to be placed just before the fall of Niniveh in 612, at a time when Jeremias was preaching with hardly a mention of the Assyrians. The prophet Osee is named (p. 15) a powerful inspiration of Jeremias, but the matter of whether or not Jeremias borrowed from Abdias a section on Edom (Jer. 49, 14-16, Abd. 1-4) is not considered when the passage is mentioned (p. 84). Yet it must be admitted that, clear though the personalities of the Minor Prophets emerge from their brief writings, they are unavoidably overshadowed by the sheer mass and power of the figure of Jeremias.

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**AILRED OF RIEVAULX: DE ANIMA.** Edited by C. H. Talbot. Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Supplement I. (The Warburg Institute; University of London; 25s.)

It is a refreshing experience as one reads these pages to be reminded again of one of the masters of the spiritual life in twelfth-century England. What were the preoccupations and possible influences in the formation of the mind of St Ailred, it is the business of Dr Talbot's long and painstaking introduction to determine. The work *On the Soul* which he has edited was the last to come from the saint's pen, and it was at least unrevised if not unfinished at his death in 1167. Dr Talbot considers that since the plan of the work appears to have been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, the former is the more likely view.

Its importance, for those who have some knowledge of St Ailred's other teaching, will probably be seen to lie not in its intrinsic value—it is not more, and often confessedly less, adventurous than its sources—but in the added witness it bears to his community of spirit with the primitive Cistercian family. Dom Anselm le Bail, whose opinion in