

REVIEWS

EZECHIEL. By Paul Auvray (in the series *Témoins de Dieu*, No. 10). (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars.)

This small book must undoubtedly be put down as one of the most exciting of recent appearances. Père Auvray, an Oratorian, has made a special study of Ezechiel, and has made an important and original contribution to the rather scanty literature on this prophet. He here enunciates a new theory about the origin, background and literary composition of the book, which sheds remarkable light on this obscure book. The outline of the same theory is not to be found elsewhere, except in the commentary of Bertholet of 1936, as is explained in the bibliographical note.

To most of us the Book of Ezechiel has hitherto been a series of somewhat disconnected apocalyptic visions and strange dramatic enactments believed to have occurred during the Babylonian exile. It is supposed that he went to Babylon with the first displaced persons under Joachin in 597 (IV Kings 24, 12), beginning his prophecies by the river Chobar in 592 (Ez. 1, 1-3).

Now the key to the new theory is that many of the prophecies are much more intelligible and the enactments easy to imagine if they are understood to have taken place in Palestine, and that the Palestinian prophecies form a first part to the whole book. These prophecies are principally concerned with the doom of Jerusalem and include the characteristic mimes which convey this message in a very concrete manner. The Babylonian prophecies, which form the last part of the book, have a much wider international view (as is natural to an exile), abandon the mime method of preaching and include the apocalyptic visions. The turning-point is the series of prophecies on the nations in chapters 25 to 32.

Once one admits the possibility of a Judean Ministry of Ezechiel, and distinguishes the traits of the Judean and the Babylonian, it then appears that almost the entire tract of chapters 2 to 24 is to be referred to Palestine, while chapters 1 and 34 to 48 are Babylonian. Chapter 33 belongs to 586 (the Fall of Jerusalem) and 3.11, 14-16 should come after this (describing Ezechiel's own migration) and leading up to the vision of the four living creatures in ch. 1, which was the inauguration of the Babylonian ministry. After this the Babylonian ministry continues (with much apocalyptic) from ch. 34 to the end. The eating of the book in ch. 2, which accords so well with the mime style, is the first prophecy of all, inaugurating the Judean ministry, which continues (apart from the migration-verses in ch. 3) down to the section on the nations (ch. 25 to 32). Half way through the Judean period we find the enactment of migration, performed at night, in ch. 12. He does not go far: by next morning (v. 8) he has halted, presumably in a village near

the capital, where he stays during the years of the siege (588-586), until the big deportation of the latter year.

This arrangement involves in fact very few displacements of the text, though the principal one, of ch. 1. together with the migration-verses in ch. 3 being shifted to before ch. 34, attracts the reader's attention perhaps unduly.

The result is a very consistent impression of the prophet and his mission. It is good to know that P. Auvray has announced (on the last page of the present book) that he hopes to write a full-length commentary on Ezechiel, this being but a sketch of its contents. Such a commentary will fill an important lacuna in Catholic exegesis and one may hope that it will appear in the famous series *Études Bibliques* where it will rank with Condamin's *Isaias* and *Jeremias* and Van Hoonacker's *Minor Prophets*. It is also good to know that P. Auvray will be responsible for Ezechiel in the new French translation of the whole Bible which has just begun to appear.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

LE ROYAUME D'ISRAËL. By L. Cheminant (in the series *Témoins de Dieu*, No. 9). (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars.)

The originality of this useful book lies in its presentation of the religious and political history of the Northern Kingdom (Israel or Samaria), from the schism of 933-2 until the deportation in 722, exclusively from the point of view of the Northern Kingdom itself. When we read the history of these 210 years in the Bible (from III Kings 12 to IV Kings 17—involving 28 chapters) we are all the time being given the parallel history of Juda at the same time. The kings are dated by the reigns in the other kingdom, and the fact that contemporary rulers in the two kingdoms on two occasions happen to have the same name (Joram in 847 and Joas in 805), that the name Ochozias occurs in both lists (though not contemporary), and that some other names are perilously similar, only adds to the confused knowledge of this history that exists in the minds of many of us. Furthermore, of the 28 chapters in question, no less than 10 are taken up with anecdotes from the lives of the prophets Elias and Eliseus, which are very familiar to us as anecdotes, but are rarely understood upon their historical background or viewed in the light of their political importance.

M. Cheminant, who is a seminary professor at Rennes, has in this book disentangled all this for us. The story is vividly and carefully told and makes fascinating reading. The character and ideals of the various rulers are studied and the forceful action of the two great prophets Elias and Eliseus receives due emphasis. It should further be remembered that the two earliest of the writing prophets, Amos and Osee also belonged to the Northern Kingdom, and that although Juda remained faithful all the time to the dynasty of David, no outstanding prophet appeared in her midst after the