

SOME BOOKS ABOUT THE BIBLE

BY

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Of all the biblical books that have appeared during recent months, the first one stands out as of particular merit among those we are describing in this note.

Gospel Gleanings, by Thomas Nicklin (Longmans; 2s.), is in fact a series of very scholarly studies of a number of points which cover most of the field of research in the subject. The sections were written at various times, and now, in the author's old age, have been gathered together into a unity. Many of Mr Nicklin's conclusions have stood the test of time, having been first stated in various articles or lectures, published, unpublished, or privately printed during the last fifty years, but they are now assembled for the study of all. And they are valuable and often new contributions. The Catholic reader is cheered to find these mature fruits of Anglican scholarship presenting the orthodox conclusions that he himself has long been taught, and presenting them with all the apparatus of recent studies. For example (p. 56), Mr Nicklin's dates for the composition of the Gospels are as follows:

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| A.D. | 36 | St Matthew put together his Oracles |
| | 43 | St Matthew put together Q |
| | 49 | St Mark wrote his Gospel |
| | 55 | St Matthew wrote his Gospel |
| | 60 | St Luke wrote his Gospel |
| | 63 | St Luke wrote the Acts |
| | | St John, son of Zebedee, wrote both his Gospel (60 years after Christ) and the Apocalypse (pp. 72ff.) |

We find a surprising and interesting treatment of matter of the 'logia' of Matthew and of Q (by Matthew—'the reader must be asked to lay aside any theories which he has been taught to regard as established as to the character of Q'—p. 67), and repeatedly the old ideas (as the usual critical theories now are) about the Synoptics, for the last fifty years regarded

as proved, have to be abandoned. The historical value of John is insisted on, and his view shown precisely to be that of an old man ('middle-aged critics have sometimes forgotten this' —p. 75). The first part deals with problems of the composition of the Gospels, while the second part deals with Gospel chronology, of which some dates might be thus tabulated:

B.C.	9	Zachary on duty, Annunciation
	8	Birth of Christ (16 or 17 May)
	7	Visit of Magi
	4	Herod's death
A.D.	30	Baptism
	33	Crucifixion, Resurrection

The argumentation is from evidence in the text, compared with calendars, patristic and Roman sources, and astronomical data (e.g., planets for Magi, moons for passovers, etc., fully tabulated). Recent opinions are discussed (including Fr Sutcliffe's and Fr Corbishley's), and a most detailed chronology is worked out. The evidence and the conclusions in these parts of the book seem convincing and offer no difficulty to the Catholic student. The presentation is lucid and admirable.

The later part of the book is a study of special historical problems: the Virgin Birth, the Brethren of the Lord, etc., and here again the conclusions are orthodox (including *Post partum inviolata*). But, as in so much orthodox Anglican work, there is a mildly Arian, or perhaps only Subordinationist, flavour about certain remarks, which tend to mar the generally most satisfactory argument. For instance, that Christ learned about his birth from his mother (p. 186), that he gradually began to understand his mission (p. 215ff.), that he could read men's hearts (p. 221), that his ideas became clearer to himself (pp. 279 and 301ff.). The evidence assembled under the heads of the 'Dominical Titles' is most valuable, but much of the speculation is invalidated by an imperfect christology, though, be it said at once, there is not a speck of doubt in the author's mind about the Divinity of Christ. It may be said, therefore, that the first 180 pages can be warmly recommended, but that the remainder must be read with reservations required by an orthodox dogma of the hypostatic union.

Certain new and somewhat startling conclusions should be noted. First, on the nature of Q (pp. 20, 67), Mark's 'group-

ing' of events (p. 9), the originality of Matthew (pp. 29, 35, 53), on the Transfiguration (pp. 130ff.), that Thaddeus=Matthias (p. 206), that Christ was bilingual and in fact frequently spoke Greek (p. 275), certain Aramaic excerpts being noticed because they were not in Greek, and lastly the theories about the shuffling of leaves, dropped and misplaced, not only in St John (as Mr Nicklin had already proposed in 1933), but also in the archetype of St Mark, where some pages were lost, which accounts for the absence of those details in Luke, who had a defective copy. The matter (size of paper and all) is worked out in the case of Mark on pp. 5ff. It must remain an hypothesis, but is one which offers certain necessary explanations.

This brings us to the next book, by a Catholic: *The Gospel according to St John, arranged in its conjectured original order and translated from the Greek into current English*, by F. R. Hoare (Burns Oates, 6s. 6d.). This book follows upon the now well-known *Original Order and Chapters of St John's Gospel*, published by the same author in 1944. The earlier book worked out in detail, and most convincingly, a hypothesis according to which the leaves of the original codex of St John's Gospel got disarranged, and although several blocks of sheets remained together, others are in the wrong order. The idea originated in the observation of certain well-known disjointings in John's narrative. These, and other less obvious ones, were found to recur at certain intervals, which enabled Mr Hoare to conjecture the size of the page of the original Greek codex, and so to sort out the contents of each page (or set of pages). The conjectured order was set out in its entirety, with a full explanation of the hypothesis, in 1944, and was far more drastic a rearrangement than any previous attempt (including Mr Nicklin's). The trouble about Mr Hoare's hypothesis is that it is so convincing that it cannot be gainsaid, yet it is so hypothetical that it cannot without much hesitation be affirmed. The present volume is a translation of the rearranged text into entirely modern English (e.g., 'Get up, we must be going'), with copious notes, frequently defending the translation according to the niceties of Greek usage. Cautious readers should be told that both volumes appeared with full ecclesiastical approbation.

In the summer the Oxford University Press began to issue a new series, entitled *A Primer of Christianity*, in three volumes, with a supplementary volume. These are intended 'both for adults and for young people leaving school who are willing to think for themselves about the Christian Faith' (blurb). The first part has appeared: *The Beginning of the Gospel*, by T. W. Manson, which sets out to answer 'What is the Christ? and Who is the Christ?' in the terms used by the first Christians, that is, in the terms of the Gospel of St Mark, which is given *in extenso* in a new modern translation (completely modern), arranged under large paragraph headings. The translation is excellent. It is interspersed with connecting links in small type explaining the sequence of events and ideas. It is a valuable piece of work and its forthright manner (rather like St Mark's itself) should interest young people, but one has to regret the wholesale acceptance of the old critical theories about Matthew being but a revised and enlarged Mark, etc.; and remarks that sound Subordinationist, if not downright Nestorian, such as the heading 'The Christ in the Mind of Jesus' (p. 22), or the statement that 'Jesus saw clearly that the clash . . . must issue in disaster for the country. And so it did in A.D. 66-70. The disciples wanted the date, but he could not give it to them.' It is indeed unfortunate that these things vitiate the carrying out of an excellent plan. The supplementary volume has also been issued: *Science, History and Faith*, by Alan Richardson (6s. 6d.). Here again the design and thesis are excellent, titles such as 'The Historical Basis of the Christian Faith', 'The Necessity of the Church', and 'God's Judgment and this World Order' are alluring. And again there is so much that is orthodox and sound, yet we find that 'the accounts of the resurrection . . . were written half a century or more after the event' (p. 57). The real proof of the resurrection of Christ is the Christian Church itself (p. 64—hardly an acceptable notion, though of course it is one of the proofs). Yet the author firmly believes in the resurrection, adding (*ibid.*) 'if the resurrection of Jesus is a fact of history, then certain philosophies must be declared inadequate: Omar Khayyám and Epicurus, Spinoza and Bertrand Russell, to mention only a few'. And Christ's Divinity is the centre of the whole of history—there is no Arianism here—and 'Christ re-

deemed human nature by assuming it' (p. 162). Membership of the Body of Christ is (quite rightly) given as the reason why people 'go to church' (p. 123), but what they do there remains unexplained. These are some of the points where the Catholic reader finds the work inadequate. The final note is good: the 'preparatory nature of this world' (p. 193) and everything ultimately converging on the life to come.

At the same time the Cambridge University Press has printed four broadcast talks of Professor C. H. Dodd: *About the Gospels* (3s. 6d.). This is a small book, a mere spark from the Professor's anvil, yet it shows us something of his thought. His concern is to represent the original audience of the Gospel, and the circumstances in which the Gospels were written. His emphasis is upon the living tradition that grew up among Christ's followers, and upon the Gospels as the first fruits of that tradition. He places the fruits, however, late: Mark was written after 64-5 (p. 2), which might be acceptable, but when Matthew is placed in 75 and Luke in 95 (p. 26), we cannot feel so sure of their historical value. John would appear as one 'soaked in the living tradition' (p. 40), rather than an eye-witness. But it is important to understand that the author places complete confidence in the veracity of the 'living tradition', at least in general, if not in every detail.

A big venture has been launched this summer, with the first issues of an 'Annotated Bible', which is to present the text of the Authorised Version with introductions and critical notes. The first two fascicules to appear are the two volumes of *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, edited by Julius A. Bewer (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 5s. each). They are attractively produced in America, where the whole series is being planned. An historical introduction on the background of the prophets precedes each group, and a short critical introduction precedes each book. The Minor Prophets are thus grouped: eighth century, Amos, Hosea, Micah; seventh century, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk; Persian period, Haggai, I Zechariah, Obadiah, Malachi, Joel; Greek period, Jonah, II Zechariah. This grouping shows the general critical attitude, which is a fairly normal one, though of course few authors can agree about the placing of Obadiah, Joel and Jonah. Zechariah is simply taken in two parts. The text is printed in lines as blank verse,

and the notes are chiefly concerned with the correction of the text, and the regular emendations now generally accepted are duly noted. The edition should prove useful as it does provide the barest minimum, and that concisely, of critical notes.

The book entitled *The Psalms, translated from the Latin Psalter, in the light of the Hebrew, of the Septuagint and Peshitta Versions, and of the Psalterium juxta Hebraeos of St Jerome, with Introductions, critical notes and spiritual reflections*, by Fr Charles Callan, O.P., was first published in America in 1944, and has become well-known. Now has appeared a new edition, accommodated to the new Latin Psalter, simply entitled *The New Psalter of Pius XII in Latin and English, with Introductions, notes and spiritual reflections*. The change is interesting: there is now no need for critical notes or comparison with the old versions. The general introduction, the particular introductions to each psalm, explaining the general meaning, and the spiritual reflections remain unchanged from the previous edition. There is no doubt that this is a most helpful book for anyone who uses the New Psalter, as its predecessor was to all who used the Vulgate Psalms. The New Psalter is largely self-explanatory, and so is Fr Callan's new translation. A sample would not be amiss (Ps. 125, 1-3):

Old Psalter

New Psalter

When the Lord changed the
bondage of Sion, we were as if
dreaming.

Then was our mouth filled with
joy, and our tongue with songs
of rejoicing.

Then was it said among the hea-
then: 'The Lord has done
great things for them'.

Yes, the Lord has done great
things for us; we are glad.

When the Lord brought back the
captives of Sion, we were as if
dreaming.

Then was our mouth filled with
laughter, and our tongue with
exultant joy.

Then said they among the hea-
then: 'The Lord has done
greatly for them'.

Yea, the Lord has done great
things for us; we are made
glad!

It is useful to have the two translations by the same person, and both in the same literal style. The new edition must have been prepared only just before Fr Callan's death in 1949 at the age of seventy-two. He was a distinguished scholar and a

consultor of the Biblical Commission. The book is published by Wagner of New York, but issued in London by Herders at 45s.

Two other books should be noticed, which are special studies of a narrower biblical field. The first is the first issue of a new series to be published by the Student Christian Movement Press 'planned to further the study of biblical theology within the Church': *Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 1, Baptism in the New Testament*, by Oscar Cullman (6s.). This is a translation (good) of *Die Tauflehre des Neuen Testaments*, published by the Zwingli-Verlag, Zürich. It is in fact a preoccupation with a particular problem in Protestant theology: the precise meaning of baptism and the legitimacy or otherwise of infant-baptism, and was called forth by the controversy among German and Swiss Protestants that followed upon the recent book of Karl Barth on baptism, in which he condemns infant-baptism, calling the practice a wound 'in the body of the Church' (cf. p. 27). Herr Cullman felt that the case for infant-baptism had not been adequately defended even among Anglo-Saxon Baptists, and that the whole matter needed to be studied on the background of the New Testament. This is the matter of his book. Similar ground (with a less particular preoccupation, but with more anxiety about the validity of the New Testament evidence) was covered by the Methodist W. F. Flemington in *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (S.P.C.K., 1948).

The other special study is *The Bible and Polygamy*, by Geoffrey Parrinder (S.P.C.K., 2s. 6d.). The question may seem remote, but becomes less so when we realise that in Africa there are no less than eight hundred independent 'African Churches', nearly all of which have gone into schism from the established missionary churches on the matter of polygamy (p. 2). It is in Africa above all that the problem exists, and it is one of the great obstacles to Christianity there. Among Islamic peoples it is now much less general. Reasons for the African's incorrigible polygamy are suggested, and their usual gibe that it is found in the Old Testament is investigated. It appears that monogamy in Israel was a gradual growth from prophetic times and is taken for granted in the later books (Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, Song of Songs—important evidence

this—Psalms and Proverbs) (p. 29). By the time of the New Testament monogamy was regular among both the Jews and the Greeks (p. 42). One of the great contributions of Christianity was the dignity of womanhood, and a study is made of the Christian idea of celibacy. At the end (p. 71) an interesting modern example is given of the 'free love' in Soviet Russia, which was destroying itself and had to be curbed by law in 1936. This small book is an interesting guide in a comparatively untrodden area of biblical lore.

Lastly, certain works have been completed, and we should welcome the appearance of the second volume of Professor Aage Bentzen's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, published in Denmark, but issued in England by Geoffrey Cumberlege, at 30s. The first volume appeared in 1949 (reviewed by the writer in *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, February, 1950). The author is primarily interested in what he terms the 'form-critical and cultic implications' in the history of literature. The first volume dealt mainly with the literary forms in the Old Testament, while here the study is worked out in the particular books. Much space is devoted to the latest developments of the documentary hypotheses in pentateuchal studies, and it is valuable to have them clearly stated, with a detailed account of their growth. Professor Bentzen has no uneasiness in assigning the completion of the Pentateuch to the year 400 (p. 72), and represents the present-day heirs of the older critical school.

Another valuable book, the second volume of which has recently appeared, is the *Greek and Latin Text of the New Testament*, by Dr H. J. Vogels (Herder, Freiburg i.B., n.p.). The first volume (Gospels and Acts) appeared in 1949 (reviewed by the writer in *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, March, 1950), and the second volume completes the New Testament. It is a new critical text by a Catholic scholar from Bonn. It will stand with the usual modern critical texts of (for instance) Nestle or Souter. Dr Vogels in his foreword said that the very format of his book shows his debt to Nestle, but he works on a different principle of selection of readings: his main determining factor is not the witness of particular isolated codices, however ancient (though of course he gives their readings), for their very fewness may easily produce an erroneous text; rather he would accept the *consensus* of the early writers and especially

the ancient versions. In other words, he would place the traditional reading, when there is some unanimity, before a discordant reading which happens to be found in a particular codex. This is indeed a valuable contribution to the study of the Greek Testament text, and one is glad that the work has now been completed. The Vulgate text alongside the Greek is the Clementine text, with the readings of Wordsworth-White in the apparatus.

Last of all we should notice a reprint, for the fact that *Letters to Young Churches*, a new translation into entirely modern English of all the Epistles by the Rev. J. P. Phillips, first published in 1947, was reprinted for the fourth time in 1949 (Geoffrey Bles, 10s. 6d.), is a notable indication of its popularity. It was a daring experiment, and one must admit that on the whole it has succeeded. A single example, from a difficult passage (Eph. 1, 4-6):

Consider what He has done—before the foundation of the world He chose us to become, in Christ, His holy and blameless children living within His constant care. He planned, in His purpose of love, that we should be adopted as His own children through Jesus Christ—that we might learn to praise that glorious generosity of His which has made us welcome to the everlasting love He bears towards the Son.

In 'everyday' passages the style is much more colloquial (II Cor. 11, 33):

'I escaped by climbing through a window and being let down the wall in a basket. That's the sort of dignified exist I can boast about.'

Probably Mr Phillips's version is about as far as the experiment can go, but it is good to know that it is being read.