over the whole of the business and distributing side of *Scripture* from the July 1953 number. This proved a benefit in every way and its sales and quality have steadily advanced. Now at last, after more than ten years, Fr Fuller is in a position to entrust *Scripture* to a younger man, in the sure knowledge that the pioneer work has been done and the foundations truly laid.

The Catholic body in this country stands therefore in very great debt to Fr Fuller for his apostolic, laborious and efficacious work in helping to bring the knowledge of the Scriptures to this generation, and in implanting a love and desire thereof. Fortunately he still remains the Hon. Secretary of the C.B.A., and with his hands now freer than for a long time past we may confidently hope that his abundant energies will continue to be directed, so far as the duties of his great parish will permit, into still vaster schemes for bringing the Bible message to our co-religionists and fellow-countrymen.

BERNARD ORCHARD, O.S.B.

IS SCRIPTURE TO REMAIN THE CINDERELLA OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY?

I doubt whether any Catholic scripture scholar has ever thought of himself as a Cinderella. Why should he ? The work of the last fifty years has brought a great change and has been rewarded by the approval and wholehearted encouragement of the present Holy Father in the encyclical *Divino Afflante*. If we read, for instance, Aubert's survey of Catholic theology in the present century,[1] we find that this change in biblical studies is given a large share of the promising picture he paints. We might have thought that the Cinderella of Theology had been turned into the Fairy Princess. But few dogmatic theologians have fallen under the spell ; and they are not the only ones to frown upon this transformation. Perhaps one of the reasons is that the transformation is not yet completed, and consequently that they have been given a wrong impression. The scripture scholar should first examine himself before he blames others, for perhaps he has been too easily satisfied with his work.

He was given a timely warning recently against any dangerous complacency. In his review of Aubert's book, Trethowan wrote : "If I may be allowed to mount a hobby-horse for a moment, I would remark that Catholic exegetes might take a rest from slapping one another on the back to consider the effects of their achievements on

[1] *La Théologie Catholique au milieu du XXe siècle* (Paris 1954).

the problem of inspiration—P. Aubert's chapters make it clearer than ever that one can allow for the effects of human weakness in the sacred writings to an extent which makes it difficult to see in them the effects of a special divine providence".[1] What have the back-slapping exegetes to say to that ? Some perhaps will slap on, nothing daunted. I doubt it. The comment may be harsh ; if its author were not already known and admired for the valuable contributions he is making to Catholic theology in the midst of the twentieth century, it might possibly be ignored. But again I doubt it, for he is simply echoing the misgivings of the exegetes themselves. He is referring directly to one particular problem : the effects of these achievements on the problem of inspiration ; but there is a more fundamental problem of which the teaching on the nature of inspiration is just a part. Has not the modern critical approach to the Scriptures stripped them of their divine quality ? Instead of being a contribution to theology have they not become a stumbling-block ? How often does the Catholic exegete see the text on which he is commenting as in a nightmare, set out in the theological manual under this or that thesis, and introduced by the formula : *Probatur ex sacra scriptura.* The vision is nightmarish because the text in those particular surroundings is a ghost of its former self, and he is responsible for its slaughter. Little wonder that the dogmatic theologian, for his part, views such operations as nothing more than an irresponsible raiding of his armoury. The professional theologian is not the only one to cry out against this. There are many who have grown to love the Bible as they have known it from childhood, with all its quaint expressions and all its mysterious inconsequences. They have an eminent spokesman to voice their complaints when Claudel pleads with passionate sincerity : "*Ne touchez pas à ma Vulgate, elle est si belle*".[2] Is the holy book, he would ask, nothing more than a collection of texts on which the modern exegete can display his critical skill ? [3] The same complaint was made with far greater insistence and solemnity in 1941, when an anonymous writer sent to the Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and Superiors of religious orders in Italy, and to the Holy Father himself, a 48-page pamphlet with the title, "A most serious danger for the Church and for souls. The critico-scientific system in the study and interpretation of Sacred Scripture, its disastrous deviations and aberrations".[4]

This was a virulent attack upon the scientific study of the Bible : philology, history, archaeology, etc., when applied to the Scriptures,

[1] *The Downside Review* (Winter 1954–5), pp. 69–70.
[2] *cf. La Nouvelle Revue Théologique* (1955), p. 666 ; and *Ami du Clergé* (1955), p. 427.
[3] *cf. L'Ancien Testament et les Chrétiens*, Rencontres No. 36 (Paris 1951), p. 9.
[4] This is only known to us through the reply of the Pontifical Biblical Commission in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXIII (1941), pp. 465–72.

are nothing less than rationalism, naturalism, modernism, scepticism and atheism. In order to understand the Bible aright, we ought, we are told, to give free rein to the Spirit: "As though all were in personal communion with the Divine Wisdom, and received from the Holy Spirit special personal illumination". The present-day students of the Bible are possessed by "the accursed spirit of pride, presumption and superficiality, under the guise of anxious searching and hypocritical scrupulosity for the letter". Hence such so-called scientific investigation should be abandoned, and we should devote ourselves to the spiritual sense of the Scriptures; and by the Scriptures is meant the Vulgate version, for there is no need of nor use in textual criticism which would treat the divine book like a human one. It is clear enough, as the Biblical Commission states, that the author lacks judgment, prudence and reverence. He certainly did not lack singleness of purpose, and who would doubt that he was filled with sincere anxiety as he considered the trends of the time. The virulence of the attack did not prevent the Commission from giving it serious attention, "in the fear lest some accusations and insinuations might disturb any pastor, and turn him from his resolution to obtain for his future priests that wholesome and proper instruction in Sacred Scripture which has so large a place in the heart of the Holy Father". In spite of its exaggerations is not this pamphlet a sign of the anxiety which others feel, lest perhaps the modern exegesis rob the Bible of its divine quality? Are we insisting so much on the human nature of God's word that we are destroying the divine?

This anonymous letter reminds us of other attacks which were made, just over fifty years ago when our present problems were only beginning. Thus, for instance, in 1898 Mechineau wrote: "It has not been without a certain surprise that we have seen brethren in the Faith go over to the other camp, which until now we have regarded as the camp of the enemy. Some consoled themselves by thinking, rightly or wrongly, that these fugitives were not theologians, and consequently their acceptance of the documentary thesis was no reason for consternation among Catholics. But today this answer, if ever it was valid, will no longer do; for we will not be able to say, for example, that the eminent director of the *Revue biblique* (Lagrange) does not wield with equal dexterity the weapons of theology and criticism. Thus the defection of such valuable men to the camp of our opponents has disturbed excellent minds".[1] Criticisms of this kind must be considered in their historical context if we wish to avoid doing their writers a grave injustice. (How difficult it is to avoid this

[1] *Études* (1898), pp. 290 ff., quoted in Braun, *L'Oeuvre du père Lagrange* (Fribourg (Suisse) 1943), p. 96.

critico-scientific bias for considering texts in their original historical circumstances.) Progress in the positive sciences advanced by leaps and bounds in the nineteenth century, and they were being applied to the study of the Bible. The results of such techniques were being used in the service of a philosophy wholly hostile to the idea of revealed religion. The threat to the Church's faith was a serious one, and her theologians were in general ill-fitted to handle it,[1] for the political conditions of the time hardly encouraged the pursuit of learning. In such a dilemma what were the alternatives ? Either they must eschew all contact with methods which led to such disastrous results ; or they might, in consideration for the spirit of the age, at least consider whether such methods need necessarily lead to these results. It is difficult perhaps, unless we are reconciled to the importance of an historical perspective, to realise now how real that dilemma was, and how understandable that many theologians should choose the wrong alternative. To admit, for instance, that literary criticism might be applied to the Pentateuch led to the conclusion that it was not the work of any one man at any one time. But did not the Church teach that Moses was the author of the whole of the Pentateuch ? And if this were proved wrong, was not the Church an unreliable teacher ? If literary criticism was applied to the Gospels, did it not demonstrate that the Evangelists arranged their material in different ways to suit different purposes ? And did not this lead to a denial that the Gospels were strictly historical documents ? And so on. It is not surprising that many viewed the modern approach with dismay ; did it not end in the modernist approach ? There were not a few sad examples to underline this kind of criticism, such as that of the unfortunate Loisy, a scholar who had entered the lists filled with zeal to defend the Church,[2] but ended by doing her great injury. Nevertheless there were others, equal in zeal for the Church, but by God's grace more far-seeing and courageous, who saw or at least suspected that it was false to conclude that all attempts to reconcile modern criticism with the old principles were destined to failure. They realised on the contrary, that to ignore modern criticism would be tantamount to a return to the catacombs. When Lagrange founded the École Biblique at Jerusalem, he showed clearly the alternative he had chosen, for the programme he arranged included courses in Hebrew, Arabic, Assyrian, history of the Ancient East, biblical archaeology, epigraphy, topography, geography.[3] He intended that his pupils should reach a standard in these positive sciences which

[1] *cf.* Fliche & Martin, *Histoire de l'Église*, VOL.21, p. 216.
[2] *cf.* Bonsirven, *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*, Fasc. XXVI.
[3] *cf.* Braun *op. cit.*, p. 20.

would enable them to use the same techniques as their opponents. Thus began the difficult and at times the extremely painful struggle towards a standard of Catholic biblical scholarship which would bear comparison with any other. As we look back on the past fifty years we can now see that no alternative was possible, if the Church was not to lose the chance of influencing her contemporaries. It would ill become us to condemn those who failed to see this in the beginning. But we would justly be condemned if we failed to learn the lesson that those fifty years teach us. Can we now abandon this critico-scientific approach ? That it has raised its own problem whilst solving so many others is most certainly true,[1] and it is hardly surprising. It is also true that we can never, in any age, live idly upon the contributions of our predecessors ; any branch of learning which produces nothing but reprints is hardly likely to be a living force in the lives of its contemporaries. If biblical scholars imagine that nothing more is required than repetition, then they are implicitly claiming that the world has not changed in the last fifty years. It has certainly changed. But has it changed so radically that a radical change is demanded, or even possible, in our exegetical methods ?

The reply of the Commission to the anonymous demand for such a radical change is clear enough. The encyclical *Divino Afflante* which appeared two years later, in 1943, is decisive, for there could hardly be a more forthright insistence upon all that is meant by the critical approach : the study of ancient languages and the recourse to the original text ; the importance of textual criticism and the insistence upon the literal sense ; most significantly of all, the need to investigate "the distinctive genius of the sacred writer, his condition in life, the age in which he lived, the written or oral sources he may have used, and the literary forms he employed".[2] Anyone with knowledge of Catholic exegesis will realise that the critico-scientific method must grow, not lessen. "It is absolutely necessary for the interpreter to go back in spirit to those remote centuries of the East, and make proper use of the aids afforded by history, archaeology, ethnology and other sciences in order to discover what literary forms the writers of that early age intended to use, and did in fact employ".[3] The simple truth is that in spite of the real problem it creates, it is even less possible to abandon such a method than it was fifty years ago. To realise this does not solve our present problem, but at least it disposes us to consider it with sympathy. If the problem were the result merely of ambition or the pursuit of novelty, then we could dismiss it impatiently

[1] The number of articles appearing at present on the spiritual sense(s) of Scripture may be taken as one indication of how pressing this problem is.

[2] *cf.* English translation, *Stand by the Bible* (C.T.S.), par. 38. [3] *ibid.*, par. 39.

enough. But the present difficulties, in spite of the human failings of the exegetes, are not of their making, and can certainly not be solved simply by putting the clock back.

The historical approach, the searching for the literal sense, the placing of the Scriptures in their original context, all this is a method of approach which is forced upon us by our age and by our own temperament. It is to be hoped that no exegete will claim that this approach is necessarily better than the methods of interpretation which were the means of preserving and spreading the Faith in former times. No-one would make such a claim unless he believed that progress is synonymous with improvement. Individuals or small communities may reject the modern methods and allow no interpretation except that of the Fathers. A man may quite legitimately still prefer to recite the psalms in Jerome's revised Latin version ; many do. The fact that as far as the actual words go much is nonsense, is quite rightly for him no argument against continuing to use it, for other factors compensate him adequately. There is the quasi-sacramental character of these venerable phrases, with all the sacred associations which have gathered around them through the centuries. Such qualities as these enable him to accomplish his particular purpose of worshipping God, far better than by using a version which is eminently intelligible, precisely because, it seems to him, it has been sterilised. But for the Church as a whole there is no choice, since the majority of the present age have the so-called historical outlook with all its disadvantages. In some ways it is a shallower outlook because it lays so much stress upon appearances. We wish to know what the actual words are intended to convey, and are often little interested in the profound ideas which others have been able to attach to them. Perhaps this attitude is deplorable, but we cannot change it any more than we can return to the pre-atomic age. There are many who with reason deplore the progress in scientific knowledge which has given us atomic energy ; the atom bomb has created great difficulties and many of our theories of politics, physics and general well-being must be revised ; but one thing we cannot do is ignore the atomic bomb. The development in historical sciences has brought a preoccupation with literal contexts into the study of the Scriptures ; this has brought with it difficulties in our presentation of theology ; but we cannot cut ourselves off from this development. We could indeed try, but only by burying our heads in the sand, which would be a refusal to preach the Gospel to the world of today. There are those whose faith is so strong that they can live their secular intellectual life according to the principles and the methods of the age, without feeling the need of applying these same methods to the acquiring of religious knowledge ;

but how dangerous is such a Jekyll and Hyde existence. The story is told, and even if unfounded it is nevertheless credible, of the biology mistress in the convent school, who was asked, "Is it true that we come from monkeys ?" and replied with stout faith, "As a biologist I naturally hold evolution, but as a Catholic I believe that the Bible is inspired, and therefore that man was created by God from the dust of the earth". Oh yes, evolution and the Bible is a trite question now ; we all know that the Bible does not set out to teach biology ; we all know that the account in the Bible is simply a popular way of teaching that God made man. But if we had not recognised and accepted an age when studies in anthropology had so far advanced as to offer evolution as a probable hypothesis, then no-one would have solved the Catholic anthropologist's dilemma. We now have an understanding of the literary forms to be found in the Bible for which Catholics would have been grateful not very long ago. This understanding has been developed only because scholars like Lagrange decided that they must take cognisance of the world in which they were living. Concentration on secondary causes must always be suspect for those who seek to know God and reveal Him to others, because there is a real danger that such a concentration will lead to a lack of appreciation or even a denial of the first cause. But such a concentration on secondary causes is the inescapable climate of our time, when men have been able to master them so thoroughly.

We cannot, even if we would, abandon this historical approach. To do so would not solve the problem, for we would have made ourselves blind and dumb. But we will likewise fail to solve it if we imagine that nothing more is required than this critical method. The complaints which are being voiced against biblical exegesis, and they are just ones, are like the murmurings of those who have watched workmen prepare the foundations of their new house ; who have watched them patiently and perhaps admired the way in which the workmen have smoothed out the rough ground and removed the debris. But however well the ground has been prepared it is only a preparation. It is true that there have been many difficulties ; it is always a longer task to rebuild with the same stones, for they must be re-dressed. But a brief period in the history of knowledge is a long one in the life of the individual ; it is difficult to be patient, unless we are actually occupied in building the foundations. It is all too easy for the exegete to become so absorbed in the details of literary criticism that he forgets his higher vocation as a theologian. He is understandably eager to lean upon the support and encouragement of the Holy Father for his critical studies, but he often overlooks the insistence on his further and more important task, in the same encyclical. "And let

them be especially careful not to confine their exposition—as unfortunately happens in some commentaries—to matters concerning history, archaeology, philology and similar sciences. . . . (They) must have as their chief object to show what is the theological doctrine touching faith and morals of each book and text. . . . By giving an interpretation such as We have described, that is, a primarily theological one, they will effectively silence those who assert that in biblical commentaries they find hardly anything to raise their minds to God".[1]

They are the more likely to fail in this, because the task is so difficult and so delicate. But it must be done ; it is the only satisfactory way of showing that their allowances for the effects of human weakness in the Scriptures have not destroyed their divine character. The task is a delicate one, for, as Aubert says, there are "theologians who lack a historical sense and think that the same timeless immutability must be attributed to the expression of religious truths as to mathematical abstractions" [2] ; but there is nothing timelessly immutable about biblical interpretation, and the exegete has been made painfully aware of it. The Catholic exegete is, or should be, a theologian, primarily concerned in the teaching of the truths of Faith. It is true that the scientific knowledge required of him leaves little time for anything else. It is unfortunately true that his work is often sharply distinguished from that of the dogmatic theologian. Theology is so vast a subject that a division of labour is in practice necessary ; but when a division of labour turns into opposition between theologian and exegete, the latter finds that he is being relegated to the position of antiquarian, literary critic, philologist, what you will, except the one thing he ought to be. He should not regard biblical theology as nothing but a more elaborate discussion of the texts which the manuals present as their proof *ex sacra scriptura.* In reality it is that part of theology which seeks to make manifest God's revelation to men, as it was received and pondered over from the day God first made Himself known to His chosen people until the end of the first generation of the Christian Church. There is no real distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology ; any division which is made has no further justification than that of practical necessity. The man whose chief field is that part of theology which is found in the Bible cannot afford to ignore those who have pondered over the truths of Faith in the succeeding centuries. Those whose task it is to consider more especially the later developments in the understanding of these religious truths cannot ignore the work of the exegete. No theologian can ignore the fact that as a part of the mind of the Church he himself

[1] *ibid.*, par. 29–30.
[2] Quoted by Trethowan in *The Downside Review* (Winter 1954–5), p. 70.

must go on pondering over these truths, and as an apostle with a mission to the men of his own time he must seek to expound those truths in a language they can understand. Let no division be made of the kind that easily becomes a cleavage ; but on the other hand, if there must be a division of labour let there be no confusion between the two as they carry out their work. The exegete is all too ready to become wholly absorbed in his preliminary work, and fail to expound that theological doctrine which is his final aim. The dogmatic theologian is sometimes inclined to neglect the work of the exegete. "Lacking the rather specialised technical preparation which biblical studies demand today, they are sometimes in danger of treating the argument from Scripture as a formality, necessary indeed, but to be disposed of as quickly as possible ; or on the other hand, of handling the argument imprudently and asking of the text something more than, or something different to what it means. . . . Collaboration between exegete and theologian is most desirable ; from it both can expect great profit. . . . It becomes necessary in our age of specialised knowledge".[1] The Catholic exegete should realise that he is in the happy position of having valuable collaborators, and that the whole burden of theology does not rest upon him. "Contrary to the case of the Protestant exegete, the Bible is not the only rule of Faith. Consequently, without any tendentious suppression of the smallest document, without having recourse moreover to any forced harmonisation, he is prepared to reconcile the evidence and present in a truer light the complex beginnings of Christianity".[2] He must not try to prove everything from his own particular source ; neither must he be forced to do so.

He has already a vast undertaking if he would expound the theological meaning of the Scriptures. How is he to do this whilst still preserving, as he must, the technical methods demanded by the times ? Evidently it is no easy task, since many intelligent critics think that these technical methods destroy the theological meaning of the Bible. His scientific approach leads him to insist upon the historical context of the Scriptures. His theology will consist in the vision of God revealing Himself gradually in the course of history. His preliminary work has shown how human the Bible is ; he must go on to show how God reveals Himself in this human way. So much of the Bible is taken up with the history of one particular people in one particular part of the world at one particular time, precisely because God chose to reveal Himself within the framework of history. Surely the Incarnation of the Word of God, at a particular time in one particular place, is the supreme example of God's way with us. Are

[1] Benoit, *Revue biblique* (1946), p. 304.
[2] Vaganay, *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*, VOL.IV, 643.

we excluded from a share in this divine revelation because we were not in Palestine during the lifetime of our Lord ? Why then should the language and style of the Bible, dated though they be, rob us of God's word ? We may be tempted to complain that at least it makes it so much harder for us to recognise and understand ; but is this really so ? Many may have felt at times that if only they had lived in Palestine in the days of our Lord they would have known Him so much better and loved Him so much more. But would we have been so different from his compatriots ? During his life at Nazareth his neighbours must surely have learned much about the service of God simply from the example of the boy next door ; but they certainly did not realise all that there was to be learned from him. Would they now complain that it was precisely because he was the boy next door, eating and drinking, playing and working like themselves, that they were prevented from realising that he was the Son of God ? I would rather believe that as they look back on their earthly lives they thank God for teaching them the little they were then capable of learning, without demanding that they should learn what they were incapable of assimilating. There is much in the word of God that still remains to be assimilated after another nineteen hundred years of divine instruction.

The Bible does not consist in the questions and answers of a twentieth-century catechism, because God would thereby have withheld his word from the centuries which preceded us, and from those to come after us. To insist on the historical limits of the Bible will not rob it of its timeless message, but will make that message all the more intelligible and attractive to us, provided that these limits are recognised for what they are, a means to an end. Who will say whether those who made our Lord so human that they denied his divinity were more unfortunate than those who so insisted upon his divinity that they destroyed the humanity ? Both heresies robbed them of the Word incarnate. If the exegete finds that his teaching on the human nature of the Bible is not welcomed, he must realise that his hearers have reason to fear that he may rob them of its divine nature. The human qualities of the Scriptures should be the means whereby men can grasp the divine message the more easily.

Biblical theology then will not be so intellectual an approach to God as the reasonings of the philosopher ; instead of speculating upon what God is, it will rather show what God has done for his chosen people, and what he has expected from them. Such an approach has its counterpart in human experience, and many will find it truly revealing. If we wish to know a man thoroughly we must see him act in many different circumstances. Is he always gentle to the point

of weakness, or can he be gentle and forbearing to the weak but severe to the obstinate ? Does he uphold his rights and principles when necessary with uncompromising firmness, but make allowances for the ignorant and the simple ? Does he demand of the child all that he demands of the adult ? Does he speak to the one precisely as he speaks to the other ? Can he make allowances for different situations ? When we have been able to answer these questions over the years and in his favour then he is a man we know thoroughly and love. Would you care to see God as he lives with his people through the centuries ? Read your Bible, and there you will see him, from the day he called his son Israel out of Egypt, young, ignorant, primitive. You will see him, slowly and gently teaching Israel, revealing himself not in the blaze of his divine glory, for that would have frightened the child, but in a way which shows so clearly his patient understanding. But as you read do not imagine that you are simply research students, interested in the development of the divine pedagogy. Each one of us is a child of God, and each one must learn all the lessons. God has also given us the Church to teach us ; thanks to her we now know so much more, but always she uses the Bible as her text-book ; and she is always teaching us, for the lessons are never known so perfectly that there is no longer any need of either teacher or text-book.

Let us not be afraid that the text-book is now out-of-date. The divinely inspired word of God, even in this age of critical scholarship, has much to teach us. We may be disappointed when the exegete tells us that the inspired Scriptures were written in a thoroughly human way. We may take it amiss that we have no certainty from the Bible that, for instance, God actually formed man from the dust of the earth. We may be dismayed to learn how ignorant and wayward God's people have been ; how primitive in their ideas and how materialistic in their ambitions. But nevertheless is it too small a thing to learn with the certainty of the divine word itself that God is a loving and indulgent Father to his children in spite of their ignorance and waywardness and materialism ? Are we so sure that we are a wholly different breed, not to find comfort and love for a God who thus reveals himself ? Those who maintain that modern exegesis has made of the Bible something in which "they hardly find anything to raise their minds to God, nourish their souls and foster their interior life, and therefore maintain that recourse should be had to a spiritual and so-called mystical interpretation" are a reproach and a warning to the modern exegete whose sin is not one of excess but of defect.

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