

SCRIPTURE

THE QUARTERLY OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION

VOL. III. No. 4

OCTOBER 1948

EDITORIAL

It is significant that many of the more recent Catholic movements are keenly aware of the need for a closer acquaintance with the Bible. We are familiar with the "Gospel Inquiries" of the Young Christian Workers for example—and other societies are doing likewise. There is indeed a growing interest, though it may not always appear on the surface. It is to satisfy this interest and to stimulate it further that our society exists. But it is of course going to take time. Our first big achievement will be the publication of the commentary on the Bible next year.

OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

It is encouraging to notice the more moderate tone of Old Testament study in non-Catholic circles. There was a time, early this century, when the extremists seemed to have it all their own way, and a great gulf appeared to exist between Catholics and Protestants. A more conservative tendency was very noticeable at the International Meeting of the *Society for Old Testament Study* held at Cardiff two years ago and the same trend was much in evidence at the recent meeting of the same society at Hulme Hall, Manchester, 7th–10th September. Thus we had a vigorous defence of the authenticity of various prophecies of Isaiah, and an even stronger attack on the whole idea of attempting to date a document from purely linguistic criteria. Again in conversation a professor said that the Latin Vulgate, though not perfect from the point of view of textual criticism, nevertheless had an unrivalled tradition of usage behind it and was a unique witness to the doctrinal tradition of the Church. Such a version might very well be better for general and liturgical use than one which was critically more perfect but which could not claim to have a tradition behind it. Such a view, coming from a non-Catholic, and moreover one expert in textual criticism, was interesting, to say the least. From the Catholic side and largely because of the more moderate attitude of non-Catholics, comes a new directive in the Encyclical Letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and later pronouncements of the Holy See, encouraging Catholics to pursue their studies more vigorously and not to be afraid to explore new paths. We may perhaps take this as an indication that closer contact with non-Catholics is quite in the order of the day. Indeed it may be hoped that Catholics will take a larger part all round in the intellectual life of the nation.

BIBLE EXHIBITION

A fine exhibition was held during July at the headquarters of the National Book League in Albemarle Street, W.1, entitled *The Bible in English Life*. Catholic Bibles were well represented—indeed only lack of space prevented their being even better represented. Unfortunately, from the Catholic point of view, only English Bibles were shown, which meant of course that the part played by the Bible in English life before the Reformation was scarcely portrayed at all, since it was the Latin Vulgate Bible that was then most used. It is too commonly assumed even now that the Bible was hardly known before the days of Wyclif. The truth is that the Bible was made known in a variety of ways. Those who could read at all, could read Latin and so make use of the Latin Bible. Indeed one often learnt to read from a Latin book. In addition there were portions of the more important parts of Scripture translated into English. In those days before the invention of printing there were few books and only a minority could read. Most people were therefore dependent on other means for their information. Sermons then were probably much more Scriptural than today; the cathedrals and churches were full of stained glass windows and mural paintings depicting scenes from the Bible. The sculpture too was frequently thoroughly Biblical. There was hardly a church perhaps which had not some Biblical representations in it. Nearly all of this was swept away at the Reformation. The windows were smashed, the paintings on the walls whitewashed and the sculpture in large part defaced. The altars too were destroyed, as the Sacrifice offered on them was abolished from the churches of the country. The evidence of all this is still to be seen everywhere. What was put in its place? A large English Bible on a reading desk, a Communion table made of wood, bare whitewashed walls, and windows of plain glass. Was this really an improvement?

In conjunction with the exhibition just mentioned, the July number of *Books*—the Journal of the National Book League—contained a long article entitled “The Bible in English Literature.” This of course likewise only dealt with the English Bible and in effect only with the Authorized Version. Religion and Literature are somewhat mixed in this article as they so often are when the Authorized Version is under discussion, and from this too an uninformed person might gather the impression that real Bible knowledge only came in with the Reformation. However, it is cause for satisfaction that our Catholic English versions were well represented at the exhibition. In view of the changing attitude we may look forward to exhibitions that finally do full justice to pre-Reformation Catholic England.

PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND

With the ending of the British Mandate in Palestine there comes to an end also the *Department of Antiquities* to which we owe so much excellent work since the first World War. This is particularly unfortunate since it is clear that excavation and research-work of any kind is going to be difficult for some time to come. The *Palestine Exploration Fund*, founded in 1865, with a fine record of Biblical research in the Holy Land, continues its work and is limited in its scope only by the funds available. To date, more than 1,000 Biblical sites have been identified or investigated by the P.E.F. since it was founded. Today there is more than ever to be done and the work becomes even more important because of the termination of the Department of Antiquities. As soon as conditions permit, excavations will be resumed, but meanwhile much study of already available material remains to be done and the records of results await publication. Learned works of this kind are expensive to produce as they have a limited circulation. The Fund is not a Government-subsidized body and depends entirely on annual subscriptions and donations. This seems the right moment therefore to call for a larger membership and to make its work known as widely as possible. It is a non-religious body in the sense that it is not run by any particular denomination. Bishop Myers, Auxiliary of Westminster, is one of the Vice-Presidents. The annual subscription of ordinary members is one guinea, for which the quarterly of the Fund is received. Further particulars may be had from the Assistant Secretary, Miss R. O. Wingate, M.A., at the office of the Fund, 2 Hinde Street, Manchester Square, London, W.1 who will be pleased to receive visitors and answer enquiries.

Treasurer of the C.B.A. Fr. Kelly has unfortunately had to resign this post owing to pressure of work and it has now been taken over by Mr. Charles Oulton, 43 Palace Street, London, S.W.1, to whom subscriptions and enquiries should be addressed.

Lending Library. Books presented since publication of the July SCRIPTURE. Presented by Miss I. Poulter: Martindale, *The Words of the Missal*; Martindale, *The Mind of the Missal*; *A Monument to St. Augustine*. Anonymous: Burrows, *The Gospel of the Infancy and other essays*. Pope, *Aids to the Bible*, Vol. II. See p. 122 for complete list of additions in the past year. We offer our sincere thanks to the donors.

Back-numbers. Complete sets of SCRIPTURE are still obtainable from the Treasurer. Vol. I (1946) to date for 12s. 6d. post free. Single copies 1s. 6d. post free.