

their aspect as witnesses to the faith of the early Church, but also as ostensible records of things that happened'.

The MUP is to be congratulated on the elegant production of this volume. It is a pity that there are a few misprints: I noticed Mark 3, 8 instead of 3, 28 (p. 98); smiliarities (p. 119);

Caphas for Cephas (p. 125); and an iota subscript omitted on p. 139. The price would have frightened me a year or two ago, but I suppose that it is alright in present conditions; at least the buyer can be sure of getting value for his money.

MATTHEW DUNN, O.C.R.

THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE, by Oswald Loretz. *Burns and Oates*, London, 1968. 182 pp. 30s.
UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL RESEARCH, by Luis Alonso Schökel, S.J. *Burns and Oates*, London, 1968. 130 pp. 16s.

The main thesis of O. Loretz's book is that the 'truth of the Bible' ought to be understood according to the meaning of the word 'truth' in the Bible itself. The author finds that in the Old and New Testaments the word means fundamentally 'faithfulness', and that when it is predicated of God it means God being faithful or true to his word (p. 87). Although there are 'truths' in the Bible in our sense, they are all regarded in Sacred Scripture 'in their connexion with a single great truth, namely the faithfulness of God' (p. 91). This thesis occupies the middle pages. The earlier part of the book prepares the way by showing how the basis of God's truth—that is his faithfulness—is the covenant, which God made and constantly renewed with his people. In the latter part the author extends this idea to the Church. Traditionally, the truth of the Bible has been understood as intellectual truth, or freedom from error. This conception, says our author, has come in from Philo and Augustine, and imposes 'a perfectionist ideal of truth which is foreign to the Bible itself' (p. 169). Attempts to defend the Bible as true, in the sense of free from all errors of fact, have become increasingly desperate and unsuccessful. In Loretz's opinion there is no reason why the Church should go on trying. All she needs to maintain is the 'truth' in accordance with the meaning in the Bible itself. Moreover the Church's own conception of itself as true, or infallible, should also be understood in the biblical sense of God being faithful to his people (pp. 155-6).

The book was first published in German in 1964 and was partly responsible for the insertion of the word '*veritas*' in the second Vatican Council's constitution *De Divina Revelatione*. Loretz was much quoted during those feverish autumn days of 1966 in Rome when Catholic biblical scholars were struggling to get something more credible and positive in the schema on Sacred Scripture than the old bogey '*inerrantia*'. Several commentators since have argued that *veritas* in the Council document

itself (11 and 19) is to be understood in accordance with Loretz's thesis.

Whatever one may think of the ramifications of the argument, the central idea is in a familiar vein. Loretz is among those biblical theologians who think that individual words somehow have a theological content, and that the word finds its ultimate significance as a predicate of God, all other uses in some way sharing in this supreme meaning. The word in this case is *aletheia* which is not to be understood from a Greek dictionary but—and this is also characteristic—from a study of the Hebrew word '*emet*' which it translates. Greek and Hebrew conceptions are sharply contrasted. Readers already persuaded of this linguistic theology from authors like Kittel or Torrance will find Loretz satisfactory reading. There are, however, some pertinent criticisms of this idea, of which Loretz may have heard. For the ominous name of James Barr twice appears upon the steep bank of footnotes that bear up the main thesis. On p. 84 Loretz makes his point about *aletheia* and how most often it translates '*emet*' and then refers to Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Literature* which an unsuspecting reader might suppose supports the point. But on turning up the reference it appears that the words are not Barr's at all but part of a quotation Barr is making from Hebert and Torrance whose interpretation he then proceeds to demolish. The very argument Loretz is asserting is anticipated by Barr and attacked as a fundamental confusion (pp. 187ff). Barr is also quoted on p. 82, note 22, apparently in support of the idea that the *sensus fundamentalis* of '*emet*' is firmness or stability. The appropriate place in Barr (p. 165) shows that this is precisely the point he is contesting. After this it is not surprising that Loretz finds no room for the obvious meaning of *aletheia* in Jud. 9, 15 and Luke 22, 59 or of '*emet*' in 1 Kings 10, 6. Altogether this does not further one's confidence in the stages of Loretz's argument nor in the footnotes that grow prodigiously from page to page.

The translation is uneven. An extraordinary piece of nonsense is attributed to P. Schutz on p. 93. One is left to guess what the main verb might have been.

Schökel's book was also written some years ago, the original Spanish being published in 1959—notwithstanding some contrary assumptions in the blurb on the back page. Schökel's main purpose is to put ordinary readers' minds at rest about the doings of modern biblical scholars. Many things assumed by scholars are well-nigh scandal to the Catholic public at large (p. 8). The public is inculpable but totally wrong in its attitude. Without censure the author sets out to induce a change of mind. He plays out the rope, admitting that the critical methods of modern scholars were developed by rationalists in one century and sceptics in another. Even so, two of the pioneers, Astruc and Richard Simon, were Roman Catholics. The official hostility meted out to them, especially Simon who was by any standards a remarkable man, is shown to be blindly destructive (pp. 58ff). The reader's sympathy is skilfully aroused. There are the same earnest scholars around nowadays who are in the same danger of being misunderstood. Fortunately they now have a green light in their favour, by reason of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), which 'opens up a new age' (p. 47). This encyclical not only defends but encourages the use of all the critical methods in biblical study. Schökel proceeds to show that

this is not a belated sell-out to the rationalists but a great step forward. He takes up interesting examples from the Old Testament to show how archaeology, textual criticism and literary genre open up a new field of understanding. Schökel wisely agrees with G. Ernest Wright that the ultimate aim of all scholarship of whatever denomination 'must not be "proof", but truth' (p. 87). I do not know what Loretz would make of a statement like this, but as Schökel has elsewhere criticized him (*Biblica* 1965) I suppose that Schökel means 'truth' in the commonly accepted sense as the opposite of falsehood.

The value of this attractive little book is further enhanced by a highly readable translation and a preface by J. A. Fitzmyer. The tone is one of honourable persuasion which should prove attractive even to those already persuaded. Alas, there are those who are neither persuaded nor honourable, as Schökel himself has good reason to know. He presented opinions similar to those in this book and in the same non-combative spirit to the Italian public in 1960 in his article *Dove va l'esegesi cattolica*. It sparked off a violent and notorious controversy. There is a bitter irony in Schökel's words 'the improved technical preparation has brought with it confidence and serenity, the necessary climate for worthwhile study' (p. 52). He little knew what a storm of Lateran horns he was going to stir up by his peaceful endeavours.

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COVENANT AND CREATION, by Piet Schoonenberg, S.J. *Sheed and Ward*, London and Sydney, 1968. 210 pp. 35s.

Dr Schoonenberg's book, the publishers admit, is a 'transitional' work charting 'one theologian's progress from a primarily speculative to a biblical-historical view of Christianity'.

There is an American university library which has bought the future contents of Robert Graves' waste-paper baskets. The librarian hopes to form a collection which will allow readers to comprehend the workings of the poet's mind. Those who have enjoyed Mr Graves' writing will doubtless in the centuries to come applaud the librarian's forethought. So also, in the future, men may be grateful for the publisher's preserving these 'foul papers'. But not now.

Now we have not time enough for observing Dr Schoonenberg's deployment of *Denzinger* and *Humani Generis*, nor even for his modest contribution to that difficult business of *le surnaturel*, and there are others who with greater

expertise can tell us what the Old Testament is about. With greater expertise and greater clarity. Cardinal Alfrink once remarked that 'what, in other countries, is thought and talked about privately is printed with us'. Private talk and public print have different manners. What will pass with a wink and a nod, what will communicate with a wave of the hand, seems sometimes intolerably dull and stodgy in a book.

Dr Schoonenberg presents his old dogmatics about God, Creation, Nature and Grace, and Jesus's Miracles with some confidence. He consistently employs the magisterial plural, and even so 'we' get quite wrong the significance of 'Let us make man in our image'.

He who would learn the best of what is going on in speculative theology had better stick with Fr Karl Rahner.

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