

and also, as can be seen in many cases, to make it clear to the singer that a group of notes has to be sung to a single syllable of the text. In the printed editions these strokes have no *raison d'être*; they hinder the choir from building up properly the phrases of the melody: they destroy the structure of the music.

I can only repeat what I said at the beginning of this review: This is the first fully documented palaeographical study on Plainchant published outside the school of Solesmes, and for that reason it is particularly valuable. Its publication was made possible through the generous support of the Master General and a number of other subscribers to whom we are very grateful. We can only proceed with the study of Plainchant if more books are produced as fully documented by musical examples and tables as the present one. We also hope for a continuation of the *Paléographie Musicale* whose publication has twice been interrupted by war—because we see from Delalande's study on the Dominican Gradual how much work has still to be done in order to clear the ground and so obtain both an uncompromising *Editio Vaticana* and a revised Dominican Gradual.

E. J. WELLESZ.

THE BIBLE IN PICTURES

PARENTS are often heard to lament the lack of books capable of explaining the Bible to their children. There is a very obvious lack in this matter among Catholic books, but the deficiency is not restricted to Catholics. There are, of course, a certain number of picture books illustrating the life of Christ or episodes in the Bible, but they are generally prepared on the false assumption that the only sense of Scripture a child can grasp is the literal sense. Herein lies a serious fallacy, for the child's mind is instinctively symbolic and metaphorical; the poet exists in the young mind long before the philosopher is born in him, long before he can analyse the meaning of his signs and make-believe. But when an artist tries to give only the literal sense to the child he begins by painting Jews and Arab sheiks as they are said to have been at the time of Christ. He then goes on to apply certain aspects of the universal appeal of Christ to every individual with an almost complete univocity in which our Lord appears not only as a baby but also as a sailor boy and fighter pilot. And since Christ in this respect has to appear as the lowest common denominator among all these types of humanity he has to be robbed pictorially of any definite character. The 'baby-Jesus' style of art turns the Word Incarnate into a simpering doll, meant to represent the neighbours' little Sally aged

eighteen months without excluding cousin Tom who is two years older. The holy Child must be no more than an outline of round cheeks and chubby limbs in order to fit into it any child character one chooses.

The otherwise remarkable and successful work of the Dominican Picture Apostolate has unfortunately begun on this false principle so that, for example, in one of its latest productions, *A Painting Book of Our Lady of Fatima* (Bloomsbury; 2s.6d.) there is a picture of 'The Infant Jesus showing us the Immaculate Heart of Mary' in which the Child appears like an advert for some baby-food and our Lady like a slightly 'goofy' non-descript.¹ This sort of thing has an undoubted and well-deserved success and does the children some good in keeping their minds on holy things. But it removes all hope of the development of the child's natural talent for symbol. Of course children lap up this type of art and always rush for the most gaudy and most sentimental holy pictures, for they naturally take the line of least resistance wherever that is encouraged. Yet they do not follow up this principle in their serious games which are often of a religious or at least mythological character. A family has been known to characterise lupins as people and to have lived for months and years in that particular land of phantasy.

Worse than this, the literal approach destroys the inner meaning of the Scriptures themselves and leaves the child with some impression of the historical facts but without a clue to what they *mean*, and without realising even that there is another meaning which is symbolised by these events they see set out before them. It is therefore not unlikely that they cast off what they learnt in this way when their minds have grown up to concentrate, as they do in most cases today, almost entirely on the letter, the external outward material happenings of day to day. The literal meaning of Scriptural events pale before the literal happenings in the cup-tie or on the screen. The child should be given some stimulus to his natural talents rather than have his spirit dried up by this unex-

1. The Bloomsbury Publishing Co. is not restricted to this form of publication. 'The Story of Margaret Hallahan' (1s.6d.) is a very readable little life of that holy foundress with a few quite attractive illustrations designed to interest somewhat older children than those for whom the 'picture apostolate' reaches. But in 'Our Lady in England' by Giles Black, O.P. (1s.6d.) the various English Madonnas of pilgrimage fame have also been robbed of much of their character in the illustrations. Browne and Nolan of Dublin have produced a Rosary in pictures, each mystery being represented by a separate, detached picture card. The introduction to these pictures (by J. F. Forde; 2s.6d.) states categorically that they are 'designed to stimulate imagination' in the children of primary schools; and yet the principle of the design is precisely this same literalism which will in fact stifle the imagination by the time the child leaves school.

plained literalism. What is required is an introduction to the spiritual sense of the Bible from the child's earliest years.

An attempt in this direction has been made recently by a Belgian artist, Pilamm, who is producing a four-volume life of our Lord with the technique of a Walt Disney and the format of a comic strip. The hundreds of little pictures, very cleverly coloured in bright but not gaudy tints, move with vivacity and rise and fall in their episodes so that the grown-up may be carried along with as much enthusiasm as the child. The artist has shown a great power of interpretation and a very vivid imagination². He has not been able to maintain in the latest volume to appear the same mastery as at the beginning so that the Last Supper and institution of the blessed Sacrament are slow and tend to slip back once again to a too great reliance on the literal sense. This tendency is marked throughout by the treatment of our Lord who appears as a rather feminine and sentimental figure despite a slight beard. The failing reminds us, without wishing to be irreverent, of the failure of Walt Disney to portray a good fairy with any conviction while animals and dwarfs and dolls and trees have always been his most authentic and symbolic productions. Pilamm was perhaps not sufficiently conscious of the danger of literalism, and of course it is always easier to portray in mime and symbol the grotesque, ridiculous or evil. Nevertheless our Lord's parables and the allegories of the Old Testament are as much concerned with the good and the worshipful as with the incongruous.

A recent illustrated Bible book has however adopted a new technique which we hope will revolutionise the whole field of Scripture teaching for children. It is expensive because it is the first of its kind and has to be something of an experiment; it is also erudite to a degree which might to the outsider appear to set it among the best adult books. And yet it is saturated in the spiritual sense of the Scriptures in such a way as to be able to start quite young children on the journey to a mature and fruitful grasp of the meaning of Holy Writ and of its relevance to modern life. This book is *Jacob's Ladder: A Bible Picture Book from Anglo-Saxon and 12th Century English MSS.*, by Nicolette Gray (Faber; 21s.). The sixty-one well produced illustrations are supported with full documentation so that the learned reader may derive great profit from studying the book. The authoress has revealed many hidden treasures of early English art and the artist and historian will both need to study her work.

² The volumes are published by Casterman of Tournai and Paris under the general title of *La Bonne Nouvelle* and are appearing also in Dutch and eventually in English.

But from the point of view of children's books—and Mrs Gray writes in the 'Foreword': 'I wanted to make a book of illustrations through which to teach children about the Bible'—nothing of her undoubted erudition steps in between the book and her object. Mrs Gray has absorbed a great deal of the patristic attitude to the Bible through what must have been a constant perusal of the works of Augustine, Jerome, Gregory, Bede and others whose names and works appear with the documentation at the end of the volume. Going further back still the interpretation is intended to be as far as possible Pauline:

For my interpretation of the incidents illustrated I have sought only in sources prior to the manuscripts used, that is in the traditional exegesis of the Fathers of the Church, particularly St Augustine. I have seldom quoted their words, but every interpretation suggested is intended to be derived from St Paul, or from their commentaries.

This might seem to be far and away too ambitious for children and only useful for intelligent adults. But while it is certainly of great value to every grown-up, Mrs Gray yet achieves her primary purpose; she presents the story of the Bible as a whole story including both Testaments in a way which can be followed and understood by children without atrophying their minds with literalism or corrupting them with sentimentality.

The letterpress describes the Biblical event by simply telling the children what the picture opposite is all about. As an example we may take the first picture with its commentary which is an explanation of the senses of Scripture. The picture is a charming twelfth century miniature from the 'Book of Beasts' showing the unicorn running to the lap of a virgin with hunters attacking the beast. The legend demands explanation.

The unicorn, the authoress explains, is really our Lord. No man on earth could have caught him or hurt him if he had stayed as God in heaven. but he loved the virgin. She is the church, or one can think of her too as any soul, yours or mine, which wants to belong to God. For love of her he became man and allowed wicked people to hurt and kill him.

She goes on to explain that she begins with this picture because it shows how the stories in the Bible had hidden meanings, which meanings become fuller and deeper the more we learn about God. That is the chief originality of this book; it does not shirk the question of the meaning of the Bible from the beginning and encourages the child to continue to marvel at the mysteries therein contained and so to continue learning more and more about the Word of God.

The language used may sometimes be too far advanced except

for older children; but such books are seldom meant for the child alone. Like most Bible picture books it is designed for a combined operation of pupil and teacher; the parent reads the text, explaining the picture while the child looks at what is being described. And the pictures will attract the children even though they lack the fascination of their original colours. As Mrs Gray declares, these pictures differ radically from those of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance; for the latter are dealing at best with mere events in time, but as a rule with the evoking of a personal emotional experience. The earlier artists were concerned with God's revelation to man which made of the two Testaments a single announcement from the hidden depths of the divine being.

Another *Pictorial Gospel* or 'a life of Christ in the works of the old masters' (by Eliot Hodgkin—Gollancz; 12s.6d.) which appeared about the same time as *Jacob's Ladder* contains 119 illustrations including 'paintings and drawings of all schools and periods, ranging from the anonymous illustrators of medieval manuscripts to Blake and Ford Madox Brown', as the publishers inform us. Although the reproductions in this *Pictorial Gospel* have had to be made through too coarse a screen for any real perfection, they are of exceptional interest for anyone attracted to the masters of religious art and contain quite a number of lesser known masterpieces (indeed the intention of the author was to select what was not over-familiar). But the work fails as an introduction to the understanding of the Gospel precisely because it ignores this difference between the pre-renaissance and post-renaissance pictures and does not attempt to produce a story which is consecutive in idiom as well as in historical sequence. The beauty of the picture itself is no guarantee of its conveying any conception of the meaning of what it portrays.

Perhaps it is unfair to compare these two books, so different in their execution, and yet both authors express something of the same intention in their introductions. In *Jacob's Ladder* the early English manuscripts (which are also represented in the collection of *A Pictorial Gospel*) combine a child-like simplicity with immense depths of meaning. Mrs Gray has selected them for their sensibility in treating their subject-matter rather than for magnificence in design, and she points to that wonderful spirituality which was maintained in other arts than painting almost to the Renaissance. This spirituality speaks almost for itself, but in particular the movement and intensity of the designs are of a nature to appeal to the child's sense of the dramatic. The child as a rule does not care about photographic realism, but he does ask for meanings behind existing events. 'What's that man doing with a sword? What's she got in her hand? Why is he in bed?'—all such questions are

answered in terms of Christ and by unfolding the mysteries of God.

The only doubt about the success of this experiment lies in the nature of the reproductions: single colour, half-tone blocks. The expense of colour was too great. But most children are not held by that type of picture. Nevertheless if parents use this book with the understanding it deserves they will be opening up a wide new vista in the Bible, both to themselves and to their children. They will also be setting their seal to this 'new' method which is really the old and only genuine method of Scripture teaching. We may hope that eventually the work thus begun may penetrate gradually into the whole field of religious art for grown-ups and children alike, and we hope too that the very worthy efforts of the many artists such as those who contribute to 'The Dominican Picture Apostolate' will learn the immensely important lesson of this *Jacob's Ladder*.

The implications of this approach to the pictorial representation of the Bible apply not only to the education of children but also to liturgical art in general. The symbolic or spiritual meaning is that with which the liturgy of its nature is concerned. The literal or physical facts of liturgical behaviour are nothing without the meaning which lies beneath. The liturgy is a matter of signs, so that the treatment of the Bible in *Jacob's Ladder* is liturgical in a fundamental sense. Yet modern liturgical art is in fact far too hampered by the exclusively literal habit of mind into which we have fallen. It has never really returned to the conception of living symbolism such as we find in the Sacraments and the genuine sacramentals. This may account for the deadness of so much of the art which surrounds the modern liturgical revival. We have almost become accustomed to liturgical designs which have been killed by a too great insistence on exact balance and tidiness, representing the type of rubrical fidelity which lacks the inner spirit. And yet with all its stiff symmetry it finds it difficult to escape a sentimentality which comes from the exclusive insistence on the literal sense.

It would therefore bring new life and meaning into liturgical art if those responsible were to return to the patristic theology which treated outward things and events as sacraments, as 'make-believe'. Great fruit would come from a renewed interest among Christians besides theologians and philosophers in this symbolic interpretation of the Bible. The Fathers set the standard and the early artists put their conceptions into line and colour for the instruction and 'elevation' of the beholder. In this way man's mind might be rejuvenated and his imagination once more be fructified by the Word made flesh.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.