

people, in bringing them out of slavery into the promised land. And it is at this moment that Christ is sacrificed: it is indeed while gathered with his disciples in the Upper Room to celebrate the Passover that he institutes the Eucharist: 'do this for a commemoration of me'. His death is to be the new Passover: no longer for a particular people from a slavery that is one of time and place, but for the whole of mankind, who through Christ pass over from the slavery of sin to the promised land of grace—the new life that Christ our Lord inaugurates through his death and his resurrection from the dead.

The Liturgy of Holy Week, the worship that the Church offers to God on these solemn days, is saturated with this sense of the biblical word that comes to life in Christ and now is made present as long as time lasts in the worship of the Church. 'Has not Christ been sacrificed for us, our paschal victim?', St Paul asks. All finds its fulfilment in Christ. The word is true, and now its fulness of meaning appears. The work of God is declared. And this is done in the worship that the people of God offer to the Father, with the word of God on their lips—their prayer no longer simply their own, but the very prayer of Christ the Lord who leads all men back to the Father.



WATER AND THE SPIRIT¹

ALEXANDER JONES

DROUGHT and flood, too little and too much, are alike man's bane. Water is at once a blessing and a curse. In the biblical tradition it has been chosen for a villainous role: from the primeval abyss through to the Deluge, from the threat of the Red Sea to the menace of Assyria's overflowing river, from the flood that would overwhelm the Psalmist to the great waters that were the throne of persecuting Rome, this one element of the four has played its malicious part. Of its nature unruly, it symbolizes the chaos which would, if it could, defy the check and order of God. But it can be harnessed. The controlling spirit of God dominates the first abyss, his hand shuts the

¹ Remarks evoked by the recent appearance, eagerly awaited, of the one-volume 'La Sainte Bible, traduite en français sous la direction de l'École Biblique de Jérusalem', Paris Cerf, 1956. It is popularly known as 'The Jerusalem Bible'. Our quotations are translated from this text.

doors of the cataracts of heaven; he divides the obstructing Sea, Emmanuel survives the cascades of Assyria; God delivers his Psalmist from great waters and, like Daniel's beasts, the Prostitute is thrust back into the abyss from which she came. And on the Lake that swallowed the demons Jesus walked.

And yet the fear of water was not native to the Hebrew as it was to the islands of the sea and to Babylonia-between-the-Rivers. Rather he dreaded the inroad of dry desert bringing thistle and thorn into the garden of God. The water of springs and of wells, the early and the latter rains, these were his blessings, his begged share of God's treasure. Israel in the desert dreamed of the Land 'watered by the rains of heaven' and Moses struck the rock in earnest of it. The Prophet inevitably adopted the theme when they sang the Land of Promise Fulfilled:

For waters shall leap in the desert,
Streams in the wilderness;
Parched land shall change to pool,
Thirsty soil to springs.

(Isaia 35, 6-7)

Naturally enough, this *altissimum donum Dei* soon comes to symbolize the treasure of God's treasures which is the Spirit:

I shall pour water on to the thirsting earth. . . .
I shall pour out my spirit upon your race.

(Isaia 44, 3)

And since the Spirit of God is articulate in his Law:

Blessed is the man . . .
Who delights in the Law of Yahweh . . .
He is like a tree planted
by a stream of water.

(Psalm 1, 2f.)

For the water is the word of God.

* * *

One would say that it is drought we have to fear, not flood. The devout Israelite trembled at the Prophet's threat:

I shall send a famine to the land,
A dearth not of bread nor of water
But of hearing the word of Yahweh. (Amos 8, 11)

And so should we. It is true that we must keep our Catholic sense of proportion: our Bible does not exhaust 'the word of the Lord', that vital and dynamic element thrusting for further expression

every day in the perceptive mind of the Church. It is true that the Church lives the Bible and we with her; that the Eucharist is the presence of the Word which speaks in Old Testament and New and which we receive, heart and mind; the Mass is the Bible in little and there can be no such thing as an unbiblical Catholic. But on the other hand we are called upon to understand what we do: before we receive the Eucharistic Word the Church bids us hear and submit to the Scriptural Word; it is the same Spirit which nourishes through both—the Fathers did not hesitate to draw the parallel. This consideration, though unnerving, must be squarely faced.

All over the Catholic world the biblical movement is gathering momentum. In our own country small but eager societies are pursuing Scriptural study with admirable zeal, though in truth they have hitherto lacked the tools. Nevertheless the mass of our people remains untouched. What is to be done? The liturgy is of course saturated with the Bible for those who follow it to drink. The robust liturgical reform of our day should be matched with a para-liturgical one, equally biblical in direction, which might be tried before it is judged. I am thinking of sermons, of hymns, of prayers private and public. Naturally one must respect old affections and childhood associations: the movement, if there is to be one, must be not violent but gentle and sure and slow—the product of conviction and not of fanaticism. If the movement is not made, we shall lose what we have and there will be nothing to replace it. We shall lose what we have, for there are certain things which bear in themselves the cause of their sure decay. In place of the honest water of Scripture we have been given bottled monstrosities that first tickle, then cloy and finally nauseate. For some who are not accounted impious certain hymns are a personal—and unfruitful—mortification. Worse, though composed with devotion and sung with piety, many are an affront to the dignity of our mother the Church. Here is perhaps the earliest Christian hymn we know:

Shown to us in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen of Angels,
Proclaimed to the nations,
Believed in the world,
Taken up in glory.

(1 Tim. 3, 16)

No doubt one profound thought for every line is too much to expect, though our fathers were capable of it, but how far this is from our botanical hymn: 'Bring flowers of the rarest'² And what an opportunity is being lost! We vastly underrate the instructive value of prayers and particularly of hymns whose repeated and deliberate rhythmic diction invites thought and confirms the memory. St Paul, at least, deserves a hymnograph and he could find one in Catholic England today.

It is ominous and disturbing that the word 'Bible' has a Protestant ring in Catholic ears—a legacy of the day when every man claimed to be a Pope, Bible in hand. But this reaction of ours not only implies some injustice to our Protestant brethren³, it also does hurt to ourselves. An attitude of vague suspicion towards the Word of God cannot be healthy: the Word itself must not be allowed to suffer for the abuses to which it has been so often subjected. Catholic devotion to this written Word can do nothing but good: it will enrich our own religious thought and at the same time restore confidence in those who suspect us of despising their dearest treasure. In effect the Bible is our common ground and there we may one day meet. The rejection of the Church's living tradition was a fever that may pass—there are already signs of a re-entry of Church and sacraments into the thought of Continental Protestantism. A sympathetic atmosphere is needed and Catholic biblical devotion will help to provide it.

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So much for the drought. What of the flood? How can we have too much of the Word of God? If by 'the Word' we mean the Word ruminated, rightly assimilated, active, we cannot have too much. If we mean the printed Text multiplied and cast abroad without direction or discrimination—though with the greatest zeal—we can have a destroying flood which would suffocate understanding if it had not first stifled interest. In truth the world is full of texts and so many unread because unreadable. To generalize unjustly and to ignore for the moment the financial difficulties, there are two methods of presentation: the packed text relieved by the old haphazard chapter divisions; the same

2 A favourite of one's own childhood, it must be confessed, but a more substantial hymn could have been sung with no less devotion.

3 Cf. L. Bouyer, *Du Protestantisme à l'Église*, Paris, 1955, pp. 1-5.

with lurid and distracting illustrations.⁴ With this second method one has less sympathy since much thought and expense which could have been devoted to the printed text has been used to divert attention from it. In both, adequate notes are for the most part lacking and this most difficult text is let loose to devour the unwary and the ignorant. In short, the water which is the Word must be controlled and canalized if it is to irrigate the fields of our religious thinking and nourish the deep root of religious activity. In the Jerusalem Bible this has been accomplished at last and the result defies flattery.

It is more than sixty years since Père Lagrange assumed the care of the infant *École Biblique* in Jerusalem—a child that was to become father of a family of scholars scattered throughout the Catholic world. His name, more than any other, is associated with our biblical revival, and rightly. His scholarship and his influence, sometimes acknowledged, sometimes not, lies behind innumerable biblical works addressed to the learned or to the general public. The magisterial series of *Études Bibliques* and the sustained excellence of the *Revue Biblique* have long commended the School to the learned world, though the public has known little of it. But now the scholars of that same School, products and in their turn promoters of the greater tradition, have raised to it a monument for all to see and admire.

In 1946 the *École Biblique* undertook to direct a new biblical translation which was to be the collective work of a team of scholars of more than thirty members shrewdly selected for their competence and specialized interest in their respective books. Each book was then subjected to a double revision: one by a scholar familiar with its problems, the other by a *littérateur* who supervised the literary style of the text and saw to it that the notes would be suitable for the general reader. The first of forty-three fascicules emerged in 1948, the last in 1954. The production of these separate fascicules matched the excellence of their substance but they cost an Englishman more than twenty pounds and it would be interesting to know how few were sold in this country. A one-volume edition was, however, planned from the beginning and after further revision (from 1953-1955) has now been triumphantly—one is tempted to say miraculously—accomplished.

⁴ We are thinking not of the texts for use in schools or societies where there is an instructor at hand but of those designed for use in the home.

Within a bulk no greater than one volume of the original Knox Bible or of a medium Douay, nearly 1,700 pages (eight of them meticulously accurate maps) contrive to lie open flat upon the desk. With the strongly bound and cheapest edition, priced at 1,800 francs (about £2), we now have within our reach what must be called, quite soberly, the best Bible in the world.

* * *

We have said that the flow of the Word must be controlled, which is to say that the text itself must first be established with the utmost care; that the translation must be exact, and even, since we are dealing with the Bible, fastidious; that the presentation must be orderly and revealing; that the notes must be scholarly and yet intelligible to the average reader; that the theological content which is, after all, the chief pursuit of those who read the Bible, should rest on firm foundations of enlightened scholarship. Not one of these qualities is lacking in the Jerusalem Bible.

All the resources of modern textual criticism have been brought to bear on the choice of texts and the rights of internal criteria are fully recognized. Thus, for example, the reading is preferred: 'He whom neither blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but God brought forth' to: 'Those who were born not of blood . . .' (John 1, 13). Nor are we astonished to find, in an edition which bears all the marks of contemporary scholarship, references to and readings from the Qumran manuscripts—the Isaian scrolls and the *peshet* of Habaquq. So for the stricture on drunkenness in our current versions we read not 'wine deceives' but 'riches deceive' (Hab. 2, 5), a reading already more suited to the context and now given external support by the Dead Sea Scrolls. The reader will also note with satisfaction the inclusion (in a footnote) of the praise-psalm which in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus follows 51, 12; its union of 'the horn of David' with 'the sons of Sadoq' is significant of its period and links up with the Messianic hope of Qumran. These are random examples which merely hint at the quality of a text which, though its footnotes faithfully give the most important variants, has been established with the sureness of touch which comes from confident scholarship.

It would be impertinent in a foreigner to attempt an appraisal of the translation from a literary point of view, but attention

should at least be called to the broad vision of Fathers de Vaux and Benoit at the head of the directive committee. It is not common—so far as one knows it is unprecedented—for Scripture scholars so to mistrust their literary competence as to submit their biblical translations for criticism and advice to qualified men of letters. But it is altogether admirable. And one suspects that the Psalms in particular could not have reached their standard of excellence without it. Needless to say, the scholar must have the last word because not only is the text sacred that he deals with but also there intervene certain technical considerations which the man of letters may not suspect or may even despise. In this matter the committee has been firm. The one-volume edition has aimed at rendering the same Hebrew or Greek terms in the same way wherever they occur—so far, it is understood, as the proximate context allows. On the same principle parallel texts of Old Testament or of New have been translated in the same words. Two advantages flow from this policy, the first more momentous though less spectacular than the second. The second advantage: recognition of the literary interdependence of texts without need for reference to the original languages. The student ignorant of Greek and of Hebrew can study from the French the relationship of the Synoptic Gospels (as he could in English using the Westminster Version) or, in the old Testament, the relationship of *Paralipomenon* to *Kings*. The first and foremost advantage: identification of the various stages in Israel's literary tradition. Thus, for example, the term 'word' can be tracked through its history from the 'word' of creation to the 'word' made flesh. And to ease this pursuit we are provided with eight pages, which are beyond price, listing key-notions with references to their principal footnotes. These pages are a deep well of understanding and of devotion upon which all may draw. Priests will observe that they are a great quarry for biblical sermons, of which we hear all too few.

Since this edition rapidly exhausts superlatives we shall lavish no praise on its notes; instead we shall offer one or two examples side by side with the corresponding notes from Douay and from the new American 'Confraternity' edition—by way of comparison only and not of disparagement since different times and different climes have their own needs. Let us take the first note of all—on the literary form of Genesis, I, 2, I-4.

Douay: None. The need was evidently not felt in the early seventeenth century; it is certainly felt now but not yet filled.

Confraternity: The account of the six days of creation, given in Chapter 1, poses some problems when it is compared with natural science. Various scholars offer different solutions. Some consider the days of creation as indeterminate periods of time; others as days of twenty-four hours. Some claim that the biblical history gives the chronological order of events; others that it is a logical arrangement of events. All Catholics must hold that the biblical account of the creation is an historical document, and not a myth or a fable.

Jerusalem Bible: This account, ascribed to the 'Priestly' source, is more abstract and theological in character than the one which follows (2, 4-25). It aims at a logical and exhaustive classification of beings; their creation is deliberately described within the framework of a week which ends with the sabbath rest. These creatures emerge from nothing at God's summons in an order of dignity which ascends to man, God's image and creation's king. The biblical text makes use of a science still in its infancy. Ingenuity should not be expended on an attempt to harmonize this literary presentation with the conclusions of present-day science. Rather must we recognize, behind a façade that betrays its period, a revealed doctrine of value for every period: a doctrine of a unique and transcendent God, anterior to this universe and creator of it.

It will be noticed at once that in the Jerusalem Bible the tone of apologetics has disappeared, or rather has passed from the negative to the positive. It will be noticed also that the theological note has been firmly and truly struck. The impression is not given that any scholars would hold to an actual period of twenty-four hours; instead, the 'days' take up their position within the whole literary form and thus lose all temporal significance. This *sanatio in radice*, this dissolution of difficulties in principle, is the constant and remarkable characteristic of innumerable notes in the Jerusalem Bible. The brief preliminary note on the Book of Jonah (p. 988) is another of a thousand examples.

Biblical interpretation suffers from many oversights. One of the most disastrous—from which even scholars are not always exempt—is the failure to appreciate the dynamic and developing

nature of biblical revelation. It is not uncommon, for instance, to treat the first chapter of Genesis as the earliest biblical writing because it happens to be printed on the first page. In this matter the date of the book, or part of a book, is of prime importance and our editions for the most part give us little reliable indication or none at all. This is not the mistake of the edition under review. The introductions to each book or group of books, cunningly condensed from the original fascicules, place all the texts in the atmosphere of their time. (A double-columned chronological table of profane and sacred history covers sixteen pages.) There is no danger of anachronism here. While on this subject of development we may compare the respective notes on 'Let us make man' (Genesis I, 26):

Douay: God speaketh here in the plural number to insinuate the plurality of persons in the Deity.

Confraternity: By the use of the plural number the Holy Spirit may have been preparing the Jew for the revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament.

Jerusalem Bible: This plural may indicate God's council with the heavenly court (the angels; cf. 3, 5, 22) and it is in this way that the Greek, followed by Vulgate, version of Ps. 8, 6 (quoted in Heb. 2, 7) has understood the text. Alternatively, the plural expresses the majesty and intrinsic richness of God's being; the common name for God in Hebrew, Elohim, is plural in form. The way is thus paved for the interpretation of the Fathers who see in this passage a hint of the Trinity.

The shift of emphasis is noteworthy from a conjecture of God's intention to the verifiable conscious sense of the human author which is, moreover, argued with the true apparatus of learning. Yet all is within the scope of the ordinary reader.

Of the presentation we have space to say very little. It is surprisingly airy, thus offsetting the necessarily small but very clear print which does not penetrate the page. And since the rule for mastering either text or empire is *divide et impera*, close attention has been devoted to the grouping of passages, each with its clear black heading. By these revealing labels of section and sub-section the old enemy of interpretation, chapter-division, has been defeated.

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We have said nothing of the prodigious marginal system of cross-reference, so sketchy in our common editions and yet so vital for the comprehension of the Bible's unified literary and religious tradition; nothing of the prudent reserve of certain notes that allows the instructed to read between the lines; nothing of the wealth of theology to be had for the seeking (a glance at the Index under 'Souffrance' or 'Sagesse' illustrates the point). We can only say that the Bibleward movement of our time is thrust forward immeasurably by this new force that has appeared. It is time that the strong bones of the biblical, sacramental word took the place of the flabby flesh of devout but merely human contrivance in all our devotions. Here they are, accessible to all who read French.

French? It may now be announced that an English translation is afoot. Its purpose will not be to oust Douay or Confraternity or Knox from the field. It is not to be a rival version: the matchless introductions and notes and textual apparatus of the French edition are already sufficient justification—an imperious invitation, one would say—of an English translation. Nevertheless it is hoped that the distribution of the books among those who can control the French and English languages will issue in a version of the text worthy of its great original, and even distinguished in its own right. On the technical, Scriptural, side the editorship will be in the hands of one whose trade it is. Until then (two years is perhaps an optimistic estimate) the reader is commended to a French edition which, we repeat in all sobriety, is the best in the world.