

Reviews

THE MEANING OF SACRED SCRIPTURE, by Louis Bouyer; Darton, Longman & Todd, 35s.

THE BIBLE AND THE LITURGY, by Jean Danielou, S.J.; Darton, Longman & Todd, 42s.

One is always on the look-out for the ideal general book on scripture. And though perhaps one can never find one that is entirely satisfactory, this book by Père Bouyer comes nearer to the ideal than most. It appeared originally in France in 1951 as *La Bible et L'Évangile*; the English edition gives it in the form of lectures delivered in the U.S.A. in 1956. A recent reviewer has commented on the strong *religious* value of Père Bouyer's books, and this one is no exception. The Introduction to the French edition explains that the book grew out of a series of lectures given at the Institut Catholique at Paris, in the chair of spiritual theology, the aim being 'to show the Word of God as the permanent source of Christian spirituality'. It is therefore not an introduction to scripture in the ordinary sense; that is, it is not primarily concerned with historical and archaeological background, nor with discussion about literary genres or the problems of inspiration and inerrancy. It concentrates on drawing out the unity of the biblical revelation, and on showing the true nature of this unity. It is in fact a book about the themes of the Bible, the real meaning of the scriptural message, not about its background, literary and historical. Not that Père Bouyer in any way belittles the importance of studying the historical setting of the Bible if we are to interpret it correctly. In fact his whole emphasis is on the historical and literal meaning of the developing revelation which is enshrined in the Bible, not on any quasi-spiritual sense which can be imposed on the text, regardless of its setting. But, as he says, the more one places the succession of biblical writings in their historical perspective, the more necessary it is to bring out their essential link, the continuity between them, which is not artificial but deep and vital because based on the unity of the developing divine revelation of which they are the expression. And one might add that in practice the historical, literary and archaeological introductory matter often seems to lack relevance unless one has first grasped something of the biblical theology of which it is the background.

Père Bouyer takes as his starting-point the demonstrable originality of Jewish-Christian spirituality, seen most clearly in the unique conception of the divine Word, the self-revelation of a God whose purpose is the salvation of men and the drawing of them into union with himself. He then passes through the stages of this unfolding revelation: the call of Abraham and of the Chosen People in him; the redeeming acts of the Exodus, and the giving of the Pro-

mised Land; the growing awareness of the moral demands of God and of his transcendence; the development of the idea of divine wisdom and of the presence of God with his people, and how this survives the shock of the Exile; the emergence and true nature of Hebrew mysticism (some excellent chapters there); the development of the ideas of the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, and the Heavenly Son of Man, the Day of Yahweh, and of the Kingdom. And then he shows how all these themes flower into the New Testament with an inevitability and yet with a transcendence that carries them far beyond their adumbrations in the Old, and that clinches the unity of the revelation while at the same time underlining the development between the two Covenants. His approach is well expressed in the final chapter: the Word of God did not make itself heard by the addition of one truth after another, with a gradual progress from the simple and concrete to the elaborate and abstract. It is rather to be likened to a musical theme continually enriched by the addition of new harmonies. And again: 'The Word of God does not progress so much in the sense of the multiplied complexity of more and more diverse propositions, as in the sense of the unity discovered between a divine personality and a divine design. And this design is wholly concerned with the union between God and man, with the reuniting of humanity, dismembered by sin, but reconstituted in its second Adam' (p. 224). A careful reading of this book, accompanied by constant reference to the text of scripture, will undoubtedly increase one's understanding of the biblical message, and deepen one's life of prayer.

One or two slight criticisms may be mentioned. The style is a trifle heavy, unfortunate in a book which is potentially of value to a wide public; and this has not been helped by the translation, which is adequate but nothing more, being quite lacking in subtlety and resource. The original date of the book (1951) leaves its mark in places. For example, there is no mention at all of the Qumran writings, which is extraordinary in a book which makes so much of the late Judaistic religious background to the New Testament. The space given to the synoptic gospels seems disproportionately small. And it is a pity that the very lucid Appendix III in the French edition, 'The first eucharist in the Last Supper', has not been translated.

Père Danielou's book in many ways complements that of Père Bouyer. Its subject is sacramental typology, the biblical types or figures which the early Fathers saw as prefiguring the Christian sacramental rites and theology. Typology is one aspect of that unity of the biblical revelation of which Père Bouyer writes; but it is one which he does not explicitly invoke though it is implicit in all he says. And it is of fundamental importance if we are to understand the nature of that biblical unity and give meaning to the scriptural interpretation of the Fathers.

For the Bible is a unity not merely because it relates a sequence of events presided over by the one God and converging on one goal: the redemption triumphantly effected and bestowed on men in Christ. This gives as it were a linear unity, the unity of historical sequence; and there always is this historical

aspect, for revelation comes to man who is an historical creature, living in time, and is therefore adapted to his conditions and needs. On this level we have simple prophecy, the foretelling of future events and especially of the event of redemption and salvation. But *within* this linear unity there is another which it is the business of typology to study: the similarity between the different stages of that historical line of development, so that the earlier is, *and is intended to be*, a rough sketch of what comes later. The earlier events are types of the later, definitive saving events. On this level we have a unity given by the constant repetition and enrichment of similar patterns; past events, persons, things being in themselves foreshadowings of future events, persons, things. In his earlier book *Sacramentum Futuri* (of which a sadly inadequate translation, *From Shadows to Reality*, appeared last year), Père Danielou wrote of typology within scripture itself. In the present volume he extends his scope to the sacraments, showing how the typology of the Fathers brings out their full meaning and depth, revealing aspects which might easily get lost to sight. The waters of baptism, for example, are usually thought of as cleansing and purifying. But biblical references make it clear that this is not the only, or even the most important, interpretation. There is also the theme of water as destructive—the waters of judgement (the Flood; see 1 Peter 3. 18–21); and the theme of water as productive—the life-giving waters (the river of life in Ezekiel 47 and Apocalypse 22). Again, the sacrament of confirmation is generally thought of nowadays in terms of fortitude, fitting a child to witness for the faith. But if we look into the typology expressed in the early confirmation rites, we find that the most fundamental idea is that of ‘bringing to perfection’. Confirmation is ‘the sacrament of the perfecting of the soul, as baptism is that of its generation. It has for object the development of the spiritual energies infused into the baptismal water’ (p. 126). ‘It is the putting into use of the new dispositions which result from the new being created by baptism’ (p. 124). This emerges from the typology which gathers round the two main characteristics of the confirmation rite: the sacrament is conferred by an anointing; and secondly it is an anointing with perfumed oil. And Père Danielou shows in detail the typological significance which these facts had for the early Fathers, and which enabled them to bring out the full meaning of the sacrament. He does the same for baptism, the eucharist, and the chief feasts in the Church’s liturgical year; but no summary can do justice to the amazingly rich and complex theology which his book reveals.

Throughout, the typology illuminates in a most remarkable way the real significance of these sacramental and liturgical acts. But it would be a mistake to see in typology nothing more than a wealth of apt illustrations by which the meaning of the Christian rites is made clearer. It is this, but it is more besides. It means that there is a real connection between the types and their fulfilment, because the *whole* is a growing manifestation of the one divine work of redemption. There is therefore at the same time a double process of elaboration and of simplification: elaboration, because an ever growing number of different

aspects of the divine work is made visible in the various types; simplification, because in the fulfilment, the antitype, all these are drawn together into one supreme divine work, which in so far as it brings God personally to earth, partakes of the unity of the divine nature. Just as the various perfections of God, though essentially one, are manifested in diverse ways throughout the whole of creation, so also with typology. There is this profound theological reason for the variety of prefigurings of the one unified reality of redemption, which is too rich to be expressed in one, though in God it is one. 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son' (Hebrews 1. 1-2). Seen in this light typology becomes enormously relevant to our daily sacramental and spiritual lives, and greatly enriches our reading of scripture. For in its light we can see our mass and communion, our confessions, our pondering of scripture, as the continued extension of God's wonderful redeeming acts, in direct continuity with the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the Resurrection, Pentecost, and with God's self-revelation contained in them. We are caught up into God's one timeless act of redeeming love which spreads itself throughout time and touches us all. All this Père Danielou's book enables us to understand more intimately. Its importance, at a time when so many are turning to both Bible and liturgy for their spiritual nourishment, should be quite evident.

One may add, however, that though the translation is clear and accurate the book has a certain density of content, and will not give its full value at first reading. It needs to be re-read and absorbed slowly. Moreover certain problems emerge which are not immediately answerable. What do we say when different Fathers interpret the same Old Testament type in quite different ways? For example, Theodore of Mopsuestia and St John Chrysostom see the water from the rock of Horeb as a type of the eucharistic wine; Cyprian refuses to do so, but connects it with baptism. Again, how can we tell whether a particular Old Testament event or person is truly a type or only an allegory? Is there intended in the divine plan to be a real connection between it and some New Testament reality, or has it simply an illustrative value? And in any case to what extent were the sacramental rites, in their composition, consciously shaped by the types which prefigured them? Or is it rather that the typology has been introduced as a *post factum* explanation of the rites? Only the first of these questions is touched on by Père Danielou, and he does not attempt a general and comprehensive answer, which in any case would probably be inappropriate. His task is chiefly historical: to state the sacramental theology contained in the typological exegesis of the Fathers. The problems which arise in the course of such a study cannot be solved *a priori*. They can only be sorted out as we come to understand more and more deeply the mind of the Fathers. But to give assurance of the authenticity of the basic principle of typology, we may note in conclusion how it has been taken up into the main theological tradition on the senses of scripture. St Thomas distinguished two main senses: the *literal* or *historical*, by which the words of scripture signified certain realities; and the

spiritual, by which those very realities in turn signified certain other realities. It is with this second sense of scripture that typology is wholly concerned.

FABIAN RADCLIFFE, O.P.

GOD'S LIVING WORD, by Alexander Jones; Chapman, 18s.

The bulk of this collection of thoughts on the Word was first delivered as a series of lectures to the first biblical congress of the Catholic Biblical Association of Australia in August 1959. Those who attended are greatly to be envied. Fr Jones has style, and humanity, and breadth of mind, and a certain poetic feel for scripture. His constant warfare is with all those wooden preconceptions which the devout layman or the earnest seminary student all too often pushes in front of himself as he approaches the sacred writings simply in order to trip himself up, and preserve himself from understanding them. He never ceases to remind the reader of what sort of language the Bible is really using, of what God is really meaning to do in giving us his Word in scripture, of what we really ought to be looking for when we read it. And so this is a most useful book to put in the hands of people when they are first girding themselves to tackle the scriptures at all seriously. It will save them from worrying about all those ultimately unreal questions—how can light have been made before the sun and the moon? how can the whale really have swallowed Jonah, and Jonah have survived in the monster's stomach? what about the many wives of the patriarchs? and so on—which have so often made study of the scriptures arid, vexing, and futile. Not that Fr Jones either intends to or does save his readers from worrying; he himself remarks that the Bible is a disturbing book, and as such he presents it—disturbing *inter alia* to habits of mind which are too often uncriticized, disturbing to the cosy and the comfortable and familiar in religion to which most of us cling so tenaciously.

In tracing the growth of God's word in scripture, the author deals with many of the great biblical themes, salvation, election, God's marital love for his people. He achieves a lively transposition of St Paul's teaching on the law, sin, death, and grace in *Romans* into a miracle play in three acts:

Prologue. The scene is the upper and filthy air to which Hamartia and Thanatos enter dancing. They embrace.

Hamartia: Thanatos, where is thy sting?

Thanatos (holding her admiringly at arm's length): The sting of Thanatos is Hamartia.

Hamartia: Yet Hamartia reigns by grace of Thanatos, and Thanatos is Hamartia's reward.

Thanatos: But Hamartia shall bring forth fruit to Thanatos. Without her he is nothing. Should she die, Thanatos dies too.

(Exeunt rapturously)

Whether St Paul's difficult doctrine about sin and death is really more intellig-