

Scripture Bulletin

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THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN

Patron

His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

The Catholic Biblical Association, membership of which is open to Christians of any denomination, aims at promoting the knowledge and regular use of the Scriptures. The Association publishes this quarterly Bulletin in which it aims at keeping its members informed of current Biblical events and new publications. In addition the Association has been responsible for several important productions. Among these we may single out *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nelson's 1953); the Catholic Edition of the *Revised Standard Version*, 1965 (NT) and 1966 (whole Bible); the series *Let's Talk About the Gospel*, St Paul Publications (a series of Gospel reading booklets); *The Sacraments in Scripture*, Geoffrey Chapman 1964 (articles reprinted from *Scripture*).

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SCRIPTURE BULLETIN

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Middlesex.

This quarterly Bulletin of the Association publishes Biblical news, articles of practical interest about the Bible, information about new archaeological discoveries in the Holy Land, news of pilgrimages to the Bible Lands, book reviews and answers to questions on Biblical matters sent in by readers.

The Bulletin is supplied free to subscribing members of the Association, who should address any inquiries to the Hon. Secretary. It is also obtainable by non-members of the C.B.A. at an annual subscription of 15s. post free.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on Saturday, 1st February 1969, at the Sacred Heart Convent, Hammersmith, London, W.6. The Chair was taken by the Rev. R. C. Fuller and the following Committee members were present: Revv. B. Orchard, T. Worden, L. Johnston, R. Murray, L. Swain, J. Curtin, Mother Theobald, Mother Paul and Mr J. Rhymer.

Fr Fuller reminded the meeting that *Scripture* had now ceased publication and he proposed a vote of thanks for the retiring Editor, Rev. T. Worden, for his untiring efforts and solid achievement during his years of editorship. He also asked for thanks for Mother Theobald in recognition of her years of hard and useful work for the C.B.A. on her retirement from the Committee.

The Secretary reported on the year's activities. A sub-committee had been formed to consider and recommend plans for future development of the C.B.A. Fr Swain also reported a gift of £500 from the C.B.A. to the British and Foreign Bible Society for their work overseas in providing Bibles at low cost, especially in view of the present collaboration between Catholics and the Bible Societies on joint Bible projects. A further grant of £100 was made to enable a student to make a visit to the Holy Land. The Secretary informed the meeting that membership of the C.B.A. had not increased during the past year and that this was due both to lack of advertising and also to the absence of anything very concrete to offer members in return for their subscription. He then went on to read the Editor's report on *Scripture* for the past year, which included a description of the events which led up to the decision to bring it to an end.

Fr Robert Murray next reported on co-operation with the Bible Reading Fellowship (see p. 25), and went on to speak of the future role and activities of the C.B.A. A discussion followed. Fr Murray suggested that the support of the Bishops be sought directly by an official letter since the C.B.A. could not hope to have any effective influence on Catholics without such backing.

The following grants were approved by the meeting: £200 to Fr Fuller for expenses in connection with editing the new Commentary; £100 to Fr Richards for a student's visit to the Holy Land; £100 to Fr Johnston for the same purpose; £100 to St Edmund's College Library; £200 for prize essays; Fr Orchard further proposed that a minimum grant of £100 per annum should be made to the proposed new 'World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate'.¹ This was agreed in principle but details would be decided later.

It was regretted that the 'Professors' Meeting' had not been held for the past two years and Fr Johnston and Mr Rhymer undertook to explore the possibilities of arranging meetings for those with a professional interest in Scripture.

¹ See *Scripture Bulletin*, Vol. I, p. 3.

A NEW CATHOLIC COMMENTARY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

In the previous number of the *Bulletin* it was stated that the new edition would retain not more than one-fifth of the matter of the first edition. This has been taken by some to mean that it is to be one fifth the size of the first edition, whereas of course it was intended to stress that four-fifths of the new commentary is to be original material. In fact the new edition will be about the same size as the first edition. It will cost eight guineas and is due for publication in the autumn. The publishers are the same as for the first edition, namely T. Nelson and Sons.

THE BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP

In the previous issue of *Scripture Bulletin* the events leading up to Catholic participation in this movement were described. These culminated in Cardinal Heenan's approval of our taking part and in Fr Robert Murray's election to the B.R.F. Committee as Roman Catholic representative. It may be as well to point out here that though the B.R.F. was founded by an Anglican clergyman, it was never intended to be sectarian or denominational and thus our joining it can be regarded as full of interesting possibilities. Indeed the ecumenical aspect has never been absent from our minds just as some years ago it was an important factor in bringing together the Bible Societies, Catholic and Protestant.

Through 1967—Fr Murray read or supervised the reading of the series of passages and comments prepared by the B.R.F. but only once, we believe, found anything to question. Indeed his experience showed that the Bible passages selected, and the type of comment prepared, both theological and devotional, were such that there was little room for doctrinal divergence and hence no call for rewriting. Occasionally some clarification seemed to be called for. The Bible had indeed been found to be 'common ground'. Now the B.R.F. has invited two Roman Catholic scholars to contribute a new series of ecumenical readings in the confidence that this further step will be a good augur of continuing participation.

Approximately 3,500 new Roman Catholic readers began to use the B.R.F. notes during 1968 and the number continues to increase. The largest groups of readers are in the Liverpool, London, Scotland and Sussex areas, but readership is sprinkled all over the country and includes a number of branches in schools and colleges and in Eire.

Not only do Catholic representatives attend meetings of the B.R.F. but the Director of the B.R.F. was invited to attend a Committee meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association on 3rd May of this year; and other informal meetings have taken place. Altogether, it would seem, a very promising start has been made—but how impossible this would have seemed even a few years ago! May it grow and develop under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God and may it lead not only to a greater understanding of God's Word but more perfect union between Christians.

THE SEARCH FOR A COMMON BIBLE

Catholics and Protestants often tend to think of a common Bible in terms of their own frames of reference—a King James version Catholics would be allowed to use, a Confraternity translation acceptable to American Protestants. But the universal Church's need for a common Bible is considerably more complex. The Second Vatican Council pinpointed the need in an unexpected way, by calling for a vernacular liturgy. Bishops in many countries realized that not one page of Gospel had ever been translated into the native language of their people. How then could the liturgy, so largely composed of passages of Scripture, be made available to their people?

The bishops' embarrassment brought many to look more closely at the work of some of the Protestant missionaries in their midst. Protestant versions of the Bible had been available in most mission lands for many years, published by various national Bible Societies who are federated together into the world-wide United Bible Societies. The Bible Societies were spawned by eighteenth-century evangelical Protestantism, and they have had the single purpose ever since of presenting the Good News in as simple a way as possible to the common man. They have concentrated, consequently, on translating an easy-to-understand Bible, and then printing it and distributing it in various mission lands around the world.

While the United Bible Societies' people have been unhappy about their progress—the Christian birth-rate is climbing more rapidly than the publication of their Bibles—by Catholic standards the U.B.S. performance has been phenomenal. Since the United Bible Societies have come into existence they have produced Scriptures in more than 1,200 languages; their scholars are currently at work in more than 500 different tongues, and dialects, and their agencies are located in 150 different countries.

By contrast, a Roman Catholic Bible has been translated into only eighty different languages.

Thus, when bishops whose flocks spoke some of the 1,100-odd other languages looked around for something on which to base a 'vernacular' liturgy, the only Scriptures available were those laboriously translated over the years by members of the Protestant Bible Societies.

It is doubtful that the founders of the various Bible Societies ever dreamed of working out a Catholic Bible, but even before the Council was well under way many of the Bible Society people began to see the need for a joint Protestant-Catholic effort, even if others weren't

so sure. The idea was furthered as the post-war generation of Protestant and Catholic Bible scholars began to work together on such projects as decoding the Dead Sea Scrolls, and began to realize that each shared the same interest in getting the best possible translation, let the chips fall where they may. And so nearly three years before the Council Fathers promulgated their biblical document, the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, Dr Olivier Béguin, General Secretary of the United Bible Societies, wrote to Mgr Jan Willebrands at the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, and inquired whether some joint Protestant-Catholic project could not be undertaken. Perhaps largely as a result of Dr Béguin's initiative, Pope Paul mentioned the United Bible Societies' endeavours by name when he wrote to the Secretariat for Christian Unity in 1966 and suggested new ways be explored to co-operate with Protestants in joint translation efforts.

The Council's *Constitution on Divine Revelation* made a change in Catholic methods on biblical translation mandatory, for it called for 'easy access to sacred Scripture for *all* the Christian faithful'. Easy access was something almost no Catholic, apart from the university-educated, had; in countries where translations were available, they were usually couched in archaic vocabularies that turned off potential new readers—and for anyone unfortunate enough to speak one of the 1,100 tongues in which no Bible had ever been translated by Catholic scholars, the outlook was even more hopeless.

Even before the Pope spoke, some of the more progressive Catholic people had been joining forces with U.B.S. men in seeking ways to establish a viable Protestant-Catholic endeavour. Understandably not all of the Protestants were overjoyed at the prospect—a feeling shared by some of the Catholics for similar reasons. Some Protestant churchmen in Latin-America, for instance, feared the much stronger Catholics would take over their national Bible Societies, and force them to get a Roman *imprimatur* before they could publish; others suspected the Catholics would pump their own peculiar beliefs into the Protestant Bibles, and thus proselytize the Protestant until the religion was snuffed out. But such feelings were the exception. United Bible Society officials issued a statement urging 'collaboration with all churches, including the Roman Catholic', and suggesting that the 'honest scholarship' now characterizing Biblical studies would make possible a common text of the Bible which could be the one source of translation for all Christians.

An American priest, Fr Walter M. Abbott, S.J., left his desk as Associate Editor of *America* to join the staff of Cardinal Bea's

Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity as its liaison with the United Bible Societies. And last year, on Pentecost Sunday, details of the U.B.S.-Catholic efforts toward joint common Bible translations throughout the world were announced.

Why did a Church as large and old as the Catholic Church, with its worldwide resources, have to seek the co-operation of a Protestant Biblical organization which most Catholics had never heard of? Because it would have been foolish not to have done so.

'It would have been unrealistic to consider implementing the Second Vatican Council decrees about translation and distribution of the Bible without taking into account the United Bible Societies', Fr Abbott says.

'The *Constitution on Divine Revelation* means not only a return to the Bible in Catholic preaching and teaching; it also means Bibles, New Testaments, Gospels, portions and selections of Scriptures for all our people, in their own language, and at a price they can afford to pay. This is the least that "easy access to the Scriptures" means.'

'Even if we had a Catholic Bible Society in every country for translation, production and distribution of the Scriptures, we still could not do alone the massive job that needs to be done.'

Because of the different uses to which the Bible is put, it poses a unique problem for the translator. There is the liturgical use, for example, with its need for traditional forms of speech. Had there not been a liturgical text that was relatively unchanging in both Catholicism and Protestantism, such things as Gregorian chant and Bach chorales could hardly have developed—or at least have survived for hundreds of years. And then there is a second need, for the serious reader, the scholar or merely the well-educated, who is able to understand nuances from such things as 'cubits' and 'drachmas', from the more subtle tenses of speech, that are beyond the frame of reference of most people. The third use is for the man on the street, and it is this man that the United Bible Societies and the Vatican are attempting to reach through their common Bible projects, whether he is an Eskimo, a Russian peasant, or a New York commuter.

Why can't this man be served by existing translations—particularly the more creative newer versions, like the Protestant J. B. Phillips, or the Catholic Kleist-Lilly or Mgr Knox? The Bible Societies have found, as have teachers of Catholic students in Confraternity of Christian Doctrine programmes, that they leave the majority of modern men cold, despite their accuracy or their literary excellence.

'The Bibles we inherited from our fathers, the Bibles that we ourselves have produced, are not those with which we shall win the

new reader of the last third of the twentieth century', says Dr Béguin. And it is the 'new reader', the common man, that the common Bible venture is really aimed toward.

'Only a small minority of people handle English well enough to make effective use of the existing translations', explains Fr Abbott. The Protestant *New English Bible* or the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible* may sell millions of copies, but they still reach only a fraction of the Christian population. And as a new translation is brought out, it is still bought largely by the same small minority of well-educated people.

'We need what the Bible Societies are now producing: a book for "new readers",' Fr Abbott asserts. 'A Bible for those newly literate, for students, for the millions who do not go to college, for the millions who read, but have not advanced much in their reading ability. It is this common-language version that we need most of all.'

He insists that by 'common language' he does not mean a watered-down version, or one with an artificially restricted vocabulary, like some of the primary readers.

'A "common-language version" omits nothing', he says. 'It is a faithful translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts.' (*The common Bible, of course, is the agreed reading of those Hebrew and Greek texts.*)

'A common-language version is for people who find traditional translations too elevated in style because the vocabulary does not correspond to everyday usage. It uses the total resources that are common to both upper and lower educational levels. It is *not* a matter of using 850 or 2,000 "basic" words. Rather, it is an auxiliary version for new literates, labouring people, and others unfamiliar with literary language. But it is also for educated people who are unused to the archaic language of the traditional church versions.'

Translators working on such versions say they are only following the examples of the original New Testament writers. Paul, for example, was attempting to communicate with all the Christian people in a given area who understood the language, whether they were Greek by descent, hellenized Jews, or 'foreigners' from such places as Rome or Galatia. But how does one go about simplifying, particularly in some of the Pauline epistles, with their long and often tortuous grammatical constructions?

'Long and complex sentences are broken down into short and direct sentences', explains Robert G. Bratcher, one of the translators who prepared a Bible Society translation of the New Testament designed primarily for people who speak English as a second language. 'Sub-

ordinate clauses give way to co-ordinate clauses. The active voice of the verb is preferred to the passive voice. Archaic forms, obsolescent terms and rare words are avoided, and all terms of weights, measures, dimensions and currency are given their modern equivalents or else provided with a meaningful functional substitute.'

While this sometimes results in anachronisms, the result seems to make the Biblical message more comprehensible to the average man. 'The modern approach avoids archaic terms such as "thee" and "thou",' says Fr Abbott. 'It also avoids such literal renderings as "probing the loins", and all phrases or words that just aren't used commonly today, in order to get the message across *together with its demands* on people. In other words, the trend is to dynamic equivalence rather than to formal equivalence.'

Just how far a particular project will go in the direction of dynamic equivalence will depend on the local group doing the work, Fr Abbott pointed out in an article on the project in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. 'Some, translating Paul's well-known phrase, will want to stay nearer the traditional "Greet one another with a holy kiss", than "Give a hearty handshake all around" [the actual translation used by Dr Eugene A. Nida].'

Fr Abbott, as the Vatican's liaison with the United Bible Societies, is very enthusiastic about the prospects that joint collaboration promise.

'The major significant fact is that we are going to have "easy access to Scripture" in a bigger and better way than we have had before', he told *U.S. Catholic* correspondent Edward Wakin in Rome.

The reason for this is that the United Bible Societies have learned to produce the Scriptures in many different languages at the lowest possible price.

'Their basic principle is: The Word of God in each man's language at a price he can afford to pay—and if he can't afford to pay anything, then give it to him free', Fr Abbott said.

This means that the Bible Societies have been subsidizing the the production and distribution of Bibles quite heavily in many parts of the world for a long time. In order to produce a Bible that a man in Africa or Asia can buy for twenty-five cents, the Bible Societies have to spend considerably more. The Bible Societies try to charge something for the Bible whenever they can, for experience has taught them that readership is higher when the recipient has paid at least part of the cost.

For many years Catholics officially discouraged co-operation with Protestants on joint Bible projects, on the grounds that it might lead to indifferentism, or a watering down of the faith. But fortunately

these problems are a thing of the past in so far as the current Biblical endeavour is concerned.

'The United Bible Society men are experts at translation, as well as production and distribution', Fr Abbott points out. 'They are scholars, and we have respected them for years. They know our scholarship, too. That is the basis of our co-operation. Thus we have a solid basis of scholarship, and we also have people with production and distribution know-how. So we can get the desired translation where it is needed, at a price which gives people easy access to it.'

Catholics have learned much from the 'grass roots' opinions the United Bible Society people have sought in working out new translations. For the translations are not worked out at a university or seminary, but only after extensive consultation with people living in the area in which they will be used. The societies have been sponsoring regular seminars for their translators periodically in Africa, Asia, and the Latin Americas. Missionaries and natives join with recognized experts in various fields to talk things over with the translators, and pinpoint special problems for a particular translation, such as language, spelling, cultural anthropology, even local custom which might create a nuance quite different than the Biblical author intended.

Catholics, in collaboration with the U.B.S. people, are now involved in more than one hundred common Bible productions—most of them for peoples in Asia and Africa.

'In most of these projects, the local bishop has made it clear that what is needed is a translation in the *current* language', Fr Abbott says. 'So it was worked out that the translation is to be in the current language of the people, not in the traditional, high-level literary style. Furthermore, it will be in the living language which is commonly understood throughout the region—and, if possible, in all regions where the language is spoken.'

The stress on 'living language' is taken seriously by the people working on the various projects. But just what does one mean by 'living language'?

In English, it would mean that the translators were attempting to create a Bible written in the language people use today—a book which could be understood not only in the United States and Canada; but in England, in India, in South Africa, in East Africa. When this happens, Fr Abbott says, the Bible will have been returned once again to the common language in which it was originally written.

'The Greek in the New Testament was not the Greek of the university man in Athens; it was the Greek spoken in all the countries

around the Mediterranean', Fr Abbott points out. 'It was spoken by people with little or no education, as well as those with good education. It was the common language.

'It was good Greek in the sense that it was grammatical—each sentence had a subject, verb and object. But these New Testament writers did not use difficult words, and their Greek did not have all the nuances of the language the people in Athens would be using.

'Today's English would be the kind of English a doctor speaks to a Puerto Rican worker in New York City who has had only six years of school. This English would be perfectly acceptable even to the doctor and his friends.

'For example, instead of speaking, at the beginning of Matthew, of "the genealogy of Christ", we would say something like "This is the birth record of Christ". Instead of referring to "fourteen generations", we would say something like "fourteen sets of fathers and sons". Instead of the "Babylonian deportation" we would say "when the people were taken away to Babylon". It would be crystal-clear English, perfectly good English, but the *common* language of *all* the people who speak English.'

Long before the Second Vatican Council's Biblical document was promulgated, people both in the Bible Societies and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity were working together, trying to create guidelines which could be followed if both Protestant and Catholic officials were later to sanction it.

'When the *Constitution on Divine Revelation* was finally promulgated in 1966, both Protestant and Catholic experts had developed a set of guiding principles on the subject of co-operation in translating', says Fr Abbott. 'We brought it to Cardinal Bea on 5th January 1967, for an all-day meeting at the Vatican with Bible Society and Catholic experts.

'Then we had to have it reviewed and accepted by each of the Bible Societies, and the executive committee of the Bible Societies had to formally approve it: We had to have it reviewed by the Pontifical Biblical Commission before giving it to the Pope for his approval. All this was done, and finally on Pentecost Sunday—2nd June 1968—the document was published: *Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Co-operation in Translating the Bible*.

What about the problem of *imprimatur*s, which had worried some of the United Bible Society people when co-operation was first suggested?

'In our *Guiding Principles* we agreed that each common Bible will follow the rules that we have in our Church for approval', Fr

Abbott said. 'That means the local bishop will be asked to give his *imprimatur*.'

In the past, when a bishop was asked to give an *imprimatur* for a biblical translation, he would usually ask one or two of the professors in a seminary to check the volume carefully.

'But in a common Bible project, following the agreement in *Guiding Principles*, this work will already have been done by the time the book is finished', Fr Abbott says. 'According to the agreement, in addition to the group of translators there will be a committee of review which includes the experts. And then there is a top committee, a consultative group, which consists of the bishop and the church leaders who will have followed every step of the work all the way. So when the final page is done, the bishop will certainly be able to give his *imprimatur* immediately.'

Meanwhile there are liturgical and other needs for Catholic biblical translations in languages where joint translations won't be available for years. What does the local bishop do then?

'In the spirit of Vatican II, a bishop must make the Word of God available to his people as well as he can', Fr Abbott says. 'Since only eighty languages have the Bible in Catholic editions, many bishops have been forced to fall back on the Bible Societies' earlier translations.'

These are so-called 'Protestant' translations, but they lack doctrinal or dogmatic notes that would be offensive to Catholics.

'The Bible Societies have produced complete Bibles in 240 languages, the New Testament alone in 301', Fr Abbott adds. 'Admittedly many of these are unsatisfactory today because they are not in up-to-date language—a fact that the Bible Societies are keenly aware of and wish to remedy, with the help of Catholics wherever possible. But until there is a complete Bible in the language of a people with necessary helps for readers, in an edition priced low enough that the book is truly "available for all", it seems clear from the *Constitution on Divine Revelation* that the bishops are justified in adopting reasonably accurate, integral editions already produced by other Christians—even though they lack the deuterocanonical books.'

In the past both Catholics and Protestants have used various Biblical passages to 'prove' their positions. Fr Abbott admits that they will be free to do this in the future with the common Bibles if they so desire, although there won't be any footnotes to say that such-and-such a verse 'proves' the Catholic doctrine on papal infallibility or the Lutheran doctrine on justification by faith. But he thinks the collaboration in producing a truly common Bible for all Christians is likely to further an approach that is considerably less polemical.

'When there is a common Bible translation available in a given language—French, Arabic, Swahili or whatever—all followers of Christ will realize that they have in their hands the same *one* message', he says.

And he says Catholics may be surprised to learn how really few verses there are in the Bible on which their Church has taken formal dogmatic stands.

'There are only twenty-five verses where the Roman Catholic Church with its full authority has defined the meaning of a Bible verse or section', he says.

One of these is the famous Matthew xvi, 16, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock . . .'. Others deal with the Body and Blood of Christ.

'In the words, "This is My Body, etc." it is defined Catholic doctrine that we have the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist; we have here the essence of the Mass; we have here Ordination to the priesthood. All of these are doctrines defined by ecumenical councils', Fr Abbott says. 'But there are only twenty-five such verses in the Bible.'

The talk of a 'common Bible' is sometimes confusing to more educated Christians, some of whom feel a common Bible has already been published. The *Revised Standard Version* already serves as a sort of 'common' Bible for many Protestant scholars, as does the new *Jerusalem Bible* for Catholics. And the translators of the forthcoming new Confraternity of Christian Doctrine translation have indicated that they want their project to be considered for such a title when it is finished. But the U.S.S.-Vatican people are using the term 'common Bible' in a different way.

'No existing translation meets the requirements for a true common Bible, because none is the product of a joint Catholic-Protestant team of scholars who have achieved a common mind', Fr Abbott holds.

'The *Revised Standard* was produced by Protestants, and simply endorsed subsequently by Catholic authorities. The English version of the *Jerusalem Bible* is, like its French original, entirely the work of Catholics (although the one-volume edition has proved to be widely accepted among Protestants). The editors of the *Anchor Bible* have made it quite clear that they do not regard their project as a common Bible, and they are right. The project does involve Catholics, Protestant, Jews, and others, but they do not work as a team; each man is responsible for his own volume. The high-level scholarly jousting and rearranging of verses of whole chapters in the volumes already published make it unlikely that this project will commend itself to the churches as a candidate for the title of "common" Bible.'

He uses the example of the Christmas story in Matthew to illustrate the difference between the existing Protestant and Catholic Bibles, and one really using 'living', common language :

'In the *Revised Standard* and the *Jerusalem Bible*, it says that Mary was *betrothed to Joseph*, and then *found-with child*. In the living English of today the word *betrothed* is hardly ever used; even in England. But if you say *engaged* to be married then you have something that is intelligible throughout the English-speaking world. When you say that Mary was *found with child* you are saying something that may be understood by a college graduate who has some feeling for 400 years of English usage. But in India or Africa that would mean Mary suddenly realized she was standing with a little child by the hand. What we need is something like this : "When Mary found she was going to have a baby". That's perfectly intelligible everywhere ; it is today's English, not a literary holdover from the time of King James.'

No definite plans have yet been made for a new 'common English Bible' by the Vatican and U.B.S. scholars, and Fr Abbott says they won't be firmed up until more people are convinced such a translation is really needed.

'When the bishops find out what we are doing in the translations of Africa and Asia, they will want something similar in English', he predicts.

The most obvious difference to Catholics, when a common English Bible is published, will be the positioning of the deuterocanonical books. Until the Council of Trent, there was some doubt about the canonicity of certain books in the Bible. Protestant Bibles published before and after Trent followed the Jewish canon and consequently omitted certain books found in the Greek Bible (the Septuagint) but not in the Hebrew. The Council of Trent, coming after the Protestant split, formally defined that Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch and First and Second Machabees were a part of the Bible, and so they have remained in Catholic Bibles. They remain in many Protestant Altar Bibles too, but not in the Catholic position, but as a separate 'apocryphal' or 'doubtful' section stitched between Old and New Testaments.

'The Bible Societies, and the Protestant Churches that have always worked with them, have been able to agree to include these books provided that they are put together as a separate section', Fr Abbott explains. 'The Protestants do not regard them as a part of the canon, but for us the ecumenical councils have defined that they are. However, the order of the books is not a doctrinal matter so it was easy enough for us to agree to change the order.'

Consequently, in the joint Catholic-Protestant Bible the seven books will be located in a group just before the New Testament, instead of scattered throughout the Old Testament as they now are.

Another major difference will be the absence of polemical footnotes, but this has been a tendency followed by both Catholics and Protestants for the last two decades in their own Bibles.

The translators will follow the same method recommended to many new readers—they will start with some of the easier books or those most used in worship services, and leave the more difficult ones for later.

'In every case so far we have begun with either the Gospel of *Mark* or *Luke*', Fr Abbott says. 'Then usually a project will go on to the *Acts of the Apostles*. Usually they need Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, and a couple of other epistles. Eventually, of course, a complete New Testament will be translated.

'In the Old Testament, the parts necessary for the liturgy are done as soon as they can be. After the translators get a certain amount of easy work done, and have improved techniques and developed skills, they are ready for the more difficult parts—the Psalms, sections of the Prophets, certain parts of *Genesis*.'

So far Jewish scholars have not worked on the joint project, which is understandable in view of the fact that all concentration to date has been on the New Testament.

'We would welcome the co-operation of Jewish scholars at any point', Fr Abbott says. 'I'm sure when we come to the Old Testament we will get Jewish co-operation. I've already had a couple of very important Jewish scholars promise their services for the future.'

All religious leaders are watching the joint translating venture with interest, for until the Vatican Council's stress on the Bible, interest in the Scriptures among Protestants had been on a long decline.

The United Bible Societies' President Dr Béguin has expressed concern about this many times, noting that seven out of eight Christians alive today do not even own a New Testament.

'The number of those outside the Church who will for ever remain ignorant of the Gospel will multiply each year by the tens of millions', he says, 'if we do not put on the market in sufficient numbers and in pleasing form at least a portion of the Scripture.'

The importance of this to the individual simply can't be over-estimated, Dr Béguin feels, for it is the Scripture 'which might, through the action of the Holy Spirit, completely transform and renew their life'.

The common Bible translations, as they become available in various languages, are bound to increase interest in Bible reading in all the churches, so those working on the projects think.

'Common-language translations', says Fr Abbott, 'faithful to Hebrew and Greek originals but truly intelligible to today's new readers, will put the Christian mission and the work of ecumenism in the hands of many more people than the older translations could ever reach.'¹

EDWARD MARON

¹ Reprinted with permission from the *U.S. Catholic*, February 1969.

BOOK REVIEWS

The New Testament, Vol. I, The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, a new translation by William Barclay (Collins, 1968) 25s.

In principle there can never be too many translations of the Bible. This is due to more causes than the seemingly inexhaustible appetite for Bible-reading manifested even in this apparently Godless age. It is also due to the fact that men are not agreed on how the Bible should be rendered—should it be into modern speech or in 'traditional' language? And even if they were agreed on this problem, it would still remain true that no single translation could ever claim to be a perfect rendering of the original text.

Dr Barclay's reputation as a popular exponent of the New Testament suggested to many that sooner or later he would try his hand at translating the text and in the volume before us we have the principal part of the New Testament together with an interesting appendix on the principles and method of translating the Bible. Professor Barclay himself has few doubts on *how* one should translate the New Testament, however diffident he may be as to the possibility of achieving one's objective. The translation, he says, quoting F. C. Grant, must be addressed to the times in which it is written. He then goes on to dispose of two attitudes which he regards as mistaken—first, that a translation, in order to be faithful, must be word for word. Few, if any, would dissent from his rejection of this point of view, once very prevalent. One has only to think of the Authorized Version with its words in italics—so given because they are 'not in the original'. A translation should render sense for sense, as St Jerome said. It should be idiomatic rather than literal. But Dr Barclay then goes on to reject the idea that the New Testament should be rendered into literary English. The one thing (he emphasizes) which the New Testament was not was literary. It was written in the common spoken Greek of the time; and the English version should attempt to produce something of the same impression on the reader. Thus Dr Barclay envisages more than one alternative to the literal rendering, i.e. besides the

literary, he singles out the colloquial. This is the sort of English into which the New Testament should be turned.

To the objection that this would make for very pedestrian English, he would reply that the beauty of the New Testament lies not so much in its language as in its content. Continuing his enumeration of the characteristics of an adequate translation, Barclay notes that every translation is to some extent an interpretation and indeed one of the marks of a good translation is the extent to which one can dispense with a commentary. In pursuit of this idea Dr Barclay next observes, with Ronald Knox, that no good translator should be afraid of being accused of paraphrasing his text.

After this enumeration of principles, the character of his translation is more or less outlined. It is clear that what he wants to produce is a translation of much the same character as that of J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*, or R. G. Bratcher, *Good News for Modern Man*; and not too different from the *New English Bible New Testament*. Whether he has in fact succeeded in producing anything better than Phillips or Bratcher will, no doubt, in the last resort, be a matter of opinion. One type of translation at any rate it is clear that Dr Barclay would not choose, namely the Revised Standard Version, with its deliberate attempt to preserve a traditional Bible English on the principle that there is a real sense in which 'the Bible is different'. Nevertheless, there is perhaps a far larger body of opinion in support of this last point of view than its opponents often give it credit for.

We may end with setting in parallel columns a well-known passage of the New Testament as translated by Phillips, Bratcher and Barclay :

MAR^K, chap. iv. *Phillips*

Then once again he began to teach them by the lakeside. A bigger crowd than ever collected around him so that he got into the little boat on the lake and sat down, while the crowd covered the ground right up to the water's edge. He taught them a great deal in parables and in the course of his teaching he said :

Bratcher

Again Jesus began to teach by Lake Galilee. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it. The boat was out in the water, while the crowd stood on the shore at the water's edge. He used parables to teach them many things, and in his teaching said to them :

Barclay

Jesus was again teaching by the lakeside, and a very large crowd gathered round him. There was such a crowd that he got into a boat and sat in it on the lake, while the whole crowd stood on the land facing the lake. Much of his teaching was in the form of parables and this is what he said to them as he taught :

R. C. FULLER

The Gospel According to St John, Vol. I by Rudolf Schnackenburg (London, 1968, Burns and Oates—Herder and Herder) £5 15s. od.

This is an awesome book. Nearly 640 pages of closely printed medium 8vo presents a formidable task to the reader; the price presents an even more formidable task to most would-be buyers. But one is given outstanding value for money and that not merely in respect of bulk. The keynote of the whole work is thoroughness; the 207 pages of Introduction

could well stand as a book in their own right; the commentary, on only the first four chapters of John, extends for 257 pages which are followed by seven Excursuses in ninety-five pages and a Bibliography which must contain more than 1,200 items. The whole is rounded off by Indices of texts and of authors which cover another twenty-six pages. *Embarras de richesse*!

The Introduction deals with traditional topics in order, 'to lay a scientific foundation for the theological commentary and to establish the principles used in the exposition'. This is sound method, and in fact introduction and commentary are very closely linked. Throughout the reader is presented with the evidence to be considered in dealing with these notoriously vexed questions. Schnackenburg leaves us in no doubt as to the answers he would himself give and they are generally carefully nuanced and balanced so as to take account of all the facts and of the considered views of scholars who have preceded him. If he admits that his commentary 'represents a scientific decision and a personal confession of faith', he has left it possible for his readers to come to their own decisions and their own confession.

The relationship between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel he discusses at two levels—that of general structure in which he notes both the similarities and the differences of approach and that of detailed content where he tends to stress the independence not only of John's sources but even more of John's theological interests; it is these latter which govern the whole enterprise of the evangelist and they are neatly summarised by Schnackenburg on page 43. The tangled problems of literary structures, of written sources, of textual displacement, of redaction—the whole question of the literary origins of the Fourth Gospel—are presented clearly. It is perhaps especially here that hypercritical scholarship has been led astray into a variety of hypotheses (which naturally tend to crystallize into 'assured results') because it has looked for a computer-like accuracy and a machine-like consistency on the part of the evangelist. To this Schnackenburg provides a welcome correction; he apologizes for 'the meagre and disappointing results' of his enquiry—we must be content largely with probabilities—but his caution is to his credit and inspires confidence. On the authorship of the Gospel Schnackenburg considers the evidence of Christian tradition, to which he is inclined to give more weight than would many a recent scholar, the evidence available in the Gospel itself and the views of modern writers. The hypothesis which he eventually proposes is that the Gospel is the work of an evangelist who was a spokesman 'transmitting the tradition and preaching of the Apostle John' and a theologian and teacher in his own right. The treatment of Johannine style is comparatively brief; particularly valuable in this section are the few pages on the 'movement of thought' which is described as 'circular . . . concentric . . . repeating and insisting and at the same time moving forward, explaining and going on to a higher level'. Equally weighty are the much longer sections which speak of the spiritual setting of the Gospel (the Old Testament, contemporary Judaism, Gnosticism, etc.) and its theological and topical interests.

Schnackenburg insists in the first section upon the essential Old Testament basis of the Gospel and in the second section upon the central notion of Jesus, Christ and Saviour. Only after all this together with an examination of the textual witnesses and a survey of Christian thought about the Gospel does he at last embark on the commentary proper. He has prepared the ground well; he has reached various 'decisions' about preliminary questions and given his reasons for them; one is impressed by his careful treatment of views he does not himself accept, by the fullness of the documentation, by the clear recognition of the gaps in the evidence, by the prudence of his distinctions between the certain, the probable, the possible and the unlikely.

The arrangement of the commentary is flexible, helpful and indeed attractive: each section of the Gospel is introduced; each verse of the section is printed in Greek and in English and given its separate exposition; there is generally a coda to each section dealing with special matters arising. A smaller type is used within the body of the commentary for additional but less essential material. By this means, Schnackenburg avoids the depressing formalism of earlier commentaries (one line of text at the top of a page filled with comment in minute type), can present the whole text he is explaining and can reduce his footnotes largely to references to the literature. All this makes for civilized reading, so that while the book can be readily used for mere reference, the reader is encouraged to tackle the commentary as a continuous piece of reflection on John.

In accord with the general purpose of the series to which this volume belongs, Schnackenburg attempts to expound primarily the theological content of John i-iv. Matters of philology, of text, of topography, of historicity, of source criticism, although treated in principle in the introduction, appear again naturally enough in the commentary as required. Schnackenburg holds in fact that the evangelist does not separate the theological principles which he enunciates from historical experience, and he explores the historical problems of ii, 13 ff., iv, 1-42 ff. and iv, 46 ff. at some length. However, it is the 'thoughts behind the narrative' which mainly engage his attention; these he draws out with precision. In considering the Cana story (p. 324), Schnackenburg maintains that the only sound method is 'to weigh the text exactly and to try to note where the evangelist has placed special emphasis so that the underlying thought can be traced by comparison with the rest of the presentation'. This indicates also his approach to the more directly theological pericopes where the thought of the evangelist in a given verse is elucidated by constant reference both to the spiritual setting of the Gospel and to the whole complex intertwined unity of thought which pervades it. The commentary format entails a certain amount of repetition in this task; that is inevitable, given the manner of Johannine writing, yet the commentary remains fascinatingly interesting and a fine example of how the real wealth of the inspired Scriptures can be made widely available through the insights and labour of a theologian and scholar. The excursuses provide further discussion of some of the perennial topics in Johannine criticism—the source of the Logos concept, faith, Son

of Man, etc. ; they manifest the same characteristics of learning and acumen as does the rest of this splendid book.

Would it be too much to hope that parts at least of this admirable commentary will be used not merely for technical, intellectual study but also for the feeding of the life of Christ in us ? Certainly Fr Schnackenburg has given us the means through which (as Vatican II says) we may 'learn by frequent reading of the divine scriptures the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ".'

P. GIFFIN

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*ha-milon hé-hadash*¹ (*The New Dictionary*) by Avraham Even-Shoshan, in seven volumes (8 in. x 12 in.), Kiryat Sefer, 15 Arlozorov St., Jerusalem, Israel. The whole Dictionary is in modern Hebrew. Vols I-V are already published ; vols VI-VII will appear shortly.

Mr G. Sarfatti, a Jewish specialist in these matters, writing in *Leshonenu* (the Review of the Academy for the Hebrew language), Vol. XXXII (1968), pp. 335-8, thinks that this New Dictionary, both in quantity and quality, is, as it were, the equivalent of the popular, small French encyclopaedia, *Le Petit Larousse*. This comparison is worth examining. But first let us underline the threefold purpose which the author of the *ND* had in mind, as explained in his preface : (a) to produce a reliable and popular, small encyclopaedia of the Hebrew language, covering its development from Biblical Hebrew up to our own times ; (b) to offer a work adapted to the needs of the present time ; (c) to write in a language which would be easily understood even by those not highly educated. In my view he has admirably succeeded in achieving these aims and I shall give some of my reasons in the course of this review. In comparing the *ND* with the *Petit Larousse* (*PL*) let us see in what way it is (1) inferior to, (2) the equal of, and (3) superior to the French work.

(1) Though *ND* has already excited the admiration of professional lexicographers, such as Mr Meir Medan, scientific secretary of the Academy for the Hebrew Language and author of an excellent Hebrew Dictionary ;² and Mr Raphael Sappan (one of the authors of the *English-Hebrew Dictionary* DVIR, Tel Aviv, 1964), it is a fact (attested by Mr Abba Ben-David in his book *leshon mikra' uleshon hakhamim, Biblical and Post-Biblical Hebrew*, DVIR, Tel Aviv, 1967) that modern Hebrew has not yet reached its perfect harmony, chiefly because of a sort of 'competition' between Biblical and Mishnaic or later Hebrew. In my view it follows that words in modern Hebrew have not yet in some cases the precision of the French terms given in *PL*. This is of course no discredit to the author of *ND* and his work will still help to clarify modern Hebrew. In some instances *ND*, by comparison with *PL* needs to be improved. For example, both give a metaphorical

¹ The transliteration of Hebrew words in this review is according to the pronunciation of modern Hebrew.

² *Me-'alef 'ad tav*. Ed. Achiasaph, Jerusalem 1964.

meaning to 'Jesuit' or 'Jesuitic'. But if we compare both dictionaries on that question, *PL* is more exact than *ND*. In the latter, p. 952 and also p. 1000, we read that the second meaning (metaphorical) for *Jesuit* is '(by metaphor) a name for a wily man'. But *PL* (1959), p. 574, on the other hand, takes care to indicate that this metaphorical meaning is pejorative.

The author of *ND* intends to treat modern Hebrew as it actually exists. But certain categories of words have never been extensively translated into modern Hebrew. We give here two of these linguistic atrophies from *ND*: (1) Whereas sixteen generic names of mushrooms are listed in *PL*, none of these is translated in *ND*, which gives only a few others such as two species of *Russula* given in a poem of Tchernikhovski (p. 995). (2) Whereas *PL* gives most of the special names for designating Christian religious things and ideas, these are in large part lacking in *ND*. Thus, under letter C alone *PL* has about fifty such terms—more than in the first five volumes of *ND*. In any complete dictionary, even in Arabic or Japanese, most of these terms would be included, but we must not forget that the Academy for the Hebrew language, which has already created more than 30,000 special words, has not so far published a special list of religious terms.

As to illustrations in the text, the quality of *ND* would be roughly equal to the 1938 edition of *PL*. In its latest editions *PL* is certainly superior to *ND*, in this respect.

But in making our comparison we must always keep in mind that *PL* is much older than *ND*. What we have today in *PL* is the work of a group of specialists (P. Larousse, C. Augé, C. Dubois, etc.) covering about a century. But *ND* is principally the work of one man and his first edition was about twenty years ago. The *ND* is also a great improvement from all points of view in relation to the preceding dictionary of the author. Thus it truly deserves the title of 'New Dictionary'.

(2) We may note that *ND*, like *PL*, improves, not only from edition to edition but also from volume to volume. Thus, Vol. I of *ND* transcribes Arabic names without minute precision, e.g. p. 364, art. *ga''adah*. The Arabic word is written without a special sign for *ta marbuta*. But in the later volumes, *ta marbuta* is correctly indicated, cf. Vol. IV, p. 1830. Similarly, there is an improvement in the transcription of Accadian words, chiefly regarding the phonetic value of the vowels: As in *PL*, so in *ND*, faults in typography are almost non-existent, apart from a few rare mistakes in printing foreign words, e.g. Vol. II, p. 683 (near the drawing of a butterfly), *machano* instead of *machaon*. But in later volumes such mistakes disappear almost entirely. In *ND* the Hebrew is pointed in the classical manner but the *scriptio plena* (without *niqqud*) is also eventually given. Another valuable feature of *ND* is that the words or meaning of post-Biblical Hebrew are clearly differentiated from the classical. For the general choice of vocabulary, both dictionaries follow a similar method of judicious eclecticism, excluding, that is, a certain number of too technical or specialized terms. For instance, *PL* makes no attempt to give the names of thousands of wild plants growing

in France; similarly *ND* does not detail the nearly 2,400 or so of wild plants growing in the Holy Land. Again, *ND* rejects neologisms that are not sound and justified terms in modern Hebrew. For instance, on p. 1967, left column, third article, it gives the Hebrew name for *lark* (Lerche in German) but omits the use of the same Hebrew word to mean *larch* (Laerche in German), because this latter interpretation is based on a confusion made by people who are familiar with German. Like *PL*, *ND* too, in the case of cognate forms, gives the form more commonly used today, for example, on p. 2215, *tsurati* (equals 'formal') is given as a synonym less frequent than *tsurani* on p. 2214. This latter form is in fact the only one found in the *Introduction to the Study of Logic*, published in Hebrew in 1964 by Professor S. Hugo Bergman, to indicate 'formal' (logic).

We note above (p. 42) that the quantity of Christian religious words in *ND* is extremely small compared to the number given in *PL*. However, the explanations of terms which are included in *ND* are always exact and respectful, except in one or two cases which the author has promised to reconsider for the next edition. Thus on p. 291, left column, the expression *ha-betula ha-qedoshah* is explained as: 'A name for Jesus' mother in the Christian tradition'; or on p. 869, right column, *hitbil* 3 is explained as 'to introduce someone to Christianity by baptism'.

(3) As regards philology, *ND* is generally very faithful in giving as far as possible, the origin of each word. For the root-words, it habitually presents many useful comparisons with cognate Aramaic and Arabic words and also words belonging to other semitic languages, chiefly those of the North Semitic range (Accadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician). The data are customarily reliable and often better than in some Biblical Dictionaries of the past, e.g. the *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* by Gesenius-Tregelles or the first edition of the *Lexicon Hebraicum* by F. Zorell. In general the practical exegesis of *ND* rests on solid ground and Catholic exegetes can find in it a good guide in many cases. When the *ND* cites an interpretation which appears to the author to be dubious it is prefaced by the phrase 'others say...' or something similar.

In a few rare instances I do not agree completely with the author. For example on p. 2174, left column, line 3, the author considers that *porât* is necessarily connected with the verb *pârâh*, following the traditional interpretation. But I think that the interpretation of Professor Speiser (Anchor Bible, Genesis xlix, 22, 'wild colt') relating *porât* to *péré* is worthy of mention.

In the natural sciences, *ND* regularly gives the scientific name of the genus in Latin at the end of the explanation in Hebrew. When speaking of plants or animals, the explanations of *ND* are in general more complete than those of *PL*. See for instance *ND*, p. 1257, left column, fourth article (with illustration), the text for the fish called 'mullus' in Latin—and compare with *PL*, p. 681, on 'mulet'.

Lastly, because of its large format, a larger size of type was possible in *ND* and this is certainly less tiring for the eyes than that of *PL*.

NOTES

(1) Incidentally I notice that *ND* considers the first word of Genesis as an adverb (p. 271, left column, beginning of last article) and not as the equivalent of a status constructus before an entire proposition, after Professor Speiser's well-known interpretation. In so doing, *ND* gives a meaning similar to the one accepted in the *Bible de Jerusalem* and also by Hon. Rabbi Dr Menahem Hartom of Jerusalem (in a personal letter which he has allowed me to publish), and many other Jewish scholars.

(2) It seems to me that it would be very interesting for scholars if *ND* were to add in its final appendices a list of the botanical names (in Hebrew and in Latin) of all the genera of wild plants found in Israel. Their Hebrew names are cognate to Biblical Hebrew most of the time.

In conclusion, I would say that my general opinion of the whole work is very much the same as that of Mr G. Sarfatti referred to at the beginning of this review. The monumental achievement of Mr A. Even-Shoshan is truly remarkable and worthy of all praise. To non-Jewish scholars I would specially recommend it for the following points: (i) it is an excellent source of good material for Hebrew philology; (ii) it habitually gives a solid interpretation of Biblical Hebrew; and (iii) it constitutes an agreeable and relatively easy means of assimilating modern Hebrew.³

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Vital Concepts of the Bible by John L. McKenzie S.J. (Burns and Oates, London, 1968) 18s.

This is a fascinating book dealing with widely differing ideas but all relevant to present developments in the Church. The chapters are articles originally published in various periodicals in the U.S.A. and Great Britain. It is highly useful to have them collected together in a more readily available form. The subjects range from the need for solitude in 'finding God' to the true value of the Gospel Infancy narratives and the significance today of Rudolf Bultmann. Fr McKenzie's gift for lucid exposition is never better displayed and the very shortness of the essays enables him to bring out effectively many striking points often obscured in longer treatises. But perhaps the book's peculiar value lies in his skill at cutting through popular illusions and showing the reader what he should really be looking for. It is difficult to single out particular points or subjects but I found most stimu-

³ Thus for example in the first ten lines of the article on the letter aleph, two-thirds of the words either belong to Biblical Hebrew or are easily understood from a knowledge of Biblical Hebrew. In the remaining part, most of the time the meaning is determined by the context; or the words are related to Aramaic, Arabic or European languages. It can be learnt without great difficulty.

lating his chapters on 'Into the Desert', 'The Growth of Expectation', 'An Exegete at the Manger'—and perhaps above all 'Rudolf Bultmann and the Bible' in which, at the risk of some oversimplification Fr McKenzie gives an admirable analysis of his thought and special importance for the present-day Christian.

R. C. FULLER

Before the Deluge by Sebastian Moore and Anselm Hurt (Geoffrey Chapman, 1969) 10s. 6d.

There is no way of finding Sebastian Moore's writing mildly interesting. He either appals one as a writer of slick euphemisms or he enthral as one of the most articulate and challenging popular religious writers of today. Having said this I must declare myself and say that I find his work splendid. The addresses printed in this book exhibit a radicalism deeply rooted in spirituality. There is something 'McLuhanesque' about the way in which he undermines our false assumptions with paradoxical and penetrating statements. "Better confess to be on the safe side". But there is no safe side of someone who loves you . . . 'The Church believes in free love and modern society does not.' 'Christ did not die to make me feel small; he died to enlarge me.'

As one who is professionally involved with Theology I could wish that Sebastian Moore would offer some of his thoughts in a more academic medium, but there is a much greater need for popular writing that is neither obscure or trite and he meets this need superbly.

Anselm Hurt's essays also contain some really profound material and it would be regrettable if the reader were to neglect them just because they lack the intoxicating quality of Sebastian Moore's contributions. In their own, somewhat softer, way, they embody the same refreshingly lucid insights into real Christianity.

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Jean Morton's *Children's Bible Cards* (Card Publications Ltd, London).

Jean Morton is known to thousands of children all over the country as 'Auntie Jean' of the Tingha and Tucker Club—an A.T.V. programme about a family of Koala Bear puppets. The publication of these twenty Bible cards followed a very amusing yet sincere series (of programmes) in which these puppets acted several Bible stories. There are fifteen cards dealing with stories from the New Testament beginning with 'Baby Jesus' and

including several of the better-known parables, the story of Palm Sunday, Zachaeus and the daughter of Jairus. The five Old Testament cards portray scenes from the sagas concerning Joseph and Moses. Each card has a picture of Koala Bears dressed up as Old Testament or New Testament characters on one side and a paraphrase of the story on the reverse.

The most that can be said for the TV programmes is that well-known stories were related in an entertaining and novel way, but it is doubtful whether there is anything to be gained by the straightforward telling of Bible stories to children. The value of the cards is even more doubtful. They would be of little use as visual aids, since the pictures are too small and too detailed for use by the whole class and the quaintness of the little bears is altogether too distracting to be edifying. The paraphrase story appears to be beyond the reading ability of the majority of children to whom the pictures would appeal. The religious educator is burdened enough in the task of sifting reality from fantasy in developing intellects without anyone adding to the fantasy by dressing up bears as Jesus or Mary or Moses or Joseph.

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