

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Luke ii, 39-40 seems to be at variance with Matthew ii, 13-14. Can you explain the probable movements of the Holy Family at this point?

It is true that Lk. seems to imply a return to Nazareth immediately after the Presentation in the Temple, forty days after Christ's birth; while Mt. mentions the visit of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents—all omitted by Lk.—and appears to imply a long stay in Egypt, before the return to Nazareth. Putting the two accounts together we get the following sequence: (1) The birth of Christ. (2) The Circumcision (eighth day). (3) The Presentation in the Temple (fortieth day). (4) Adoration of the Magi. (5) Flight into Egypt. (6) Massacre of the Innocents. (7) The return to Nazareth.

This seems to be the more probable order of events. It has however been suggested that events 4, 5, 6, and the stay in Egypt, all took place before the Presentation. If this were so, there would, of course, be no problem in Lk. ii, 39. The Bible does not indeed tell us anything about the time taken, but, bearing in mind the distance of Egypt from Palestine and the number of events recorded, it seems unlikely that all could have taken place within the forty days after Christ's birth. There is a more serious difficulty. If Christ was born not later than B.C.6, as most people would now admit, and the Holy Family remained in Egypt (Mt. ii, 19) until after the death of Herod in B.C.4, this would at once exclude the possibility of putting these events before the Presentation.

Why does Lk. omit these events? Perhaps for the simple reason that they had already been related by Mt. or because he did not consider them suitable for his particular purpose. Or was it because he did not know of them? He had been the bosom companion of St. Paul for many years and we cannot doubt that St. Paul would have heard of these extraordinary events of Christ's childhood from the other Apostles. And in that case, would he not have passed them on to St. Luke? On the other hand, as Lagrange observes, if Lk. had known about them (granting that he might have omitted them for reasons best known to himself) would he have worded verse 39 as in fact he has done? This wording is hard to reconcile with the view that Lk. knew of the events he has left out, and which are related in Mt. Of course, he says nothing that excludes them. He does not, for example, say that on coming out of the Temple after the Presentation, they immediately took the road north to Nazareth. Nevertheless, perhaps his wording does suggest that he at least did not know of the other events.

In any case, we should not ascribe our own modes of expression to the Evangelists who wrote according to the customs of their time and people. It is common enough in the Bible to find two events related one after the other, the second occurring, to all appearances, immediately

after the first, yet in fact happening some time afterwards. Thus in Lk. iv, 14, we get the impression that Jesus went back to Galilee at once after his fast in the desert, though from Jn. i, 35 ff we know that many things happened before He returned to Galilee (Jn. iv, 3). So also in the Old Testament it is stated that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, returned to Nineveh after his disastrous expedition against Judah "And as he was worshipping in the Temple of Nesroch, his god, Adramelech and Sarasar, his sons, slew him with the sword" (IV Kings xix, 37). Yet we know from secular sources that about twenty years elapsed between his return and his death. The Biblical writers composed religious history and did not hesitate to leave out events which had no special bearing on their theme or which had already been related elsewhere.

J. P. ARENDZEN.

What is the meaning of "Let no temptation take hold of you but such as is human" ? I Cor. x, 13.

In this passage there is a divergence between the Latin text of which our English is a translation and the Greek original. In the latter we read: "No temptation *has befallen* you which goes beyond human strength," which reminds the Corinthians that thus far they have not encountered the severest trials. Some writers, who comment on the passage, think that St. Paul is here encouraging the Corinthians by promising them that as God has so far sustained them in adversity so too He will in the future, no matter how severe the difficulties they may encounter. Others however maintain that he is warning them that they must not be too confident of not falling in the future from the fact that they have not fallen in the past because they have not yet been sorely tried. Mgr. Knox writes: "The Corinthians have not yet come up against persecution; what if they did? These Christians who are so very broad-minded about eating things offered to idols, when they have nothing worse to fear than a little chaffing from their neighbours—how bold a front would they show, if they were offered the choice, 'Diana or Christ'? A useful lesson for all of us, in broad-minded days." *Epistles and Gospels with Notes*, p. 201. The questioner might well refer to this work, where the whole passage and difficulty is fully treated.

R. J. FOSTER.

If the Vulgate text of I Cor. xv, 51 is a faulty translation, how far does it diverge from the true meaning of the original Greek; and how is this divergence to be reconciled with the decree of the Council of Trent declaring the Vulgate authentic?

The difficulty is twofold—textual and doctrinal.

I. *Textual*. There are three main divergent readings:

(i) We shall not all indeed sleep, but we shall all be changed (*Original Greek*).