

Scripture

THE QUARTERLY OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION

VOLUME VII

OCTOBER 1955

No 4

EDITORIAL

This number of *Scripture* is the last to be issued under the present editorship. The retiring editor announces with great pleasure that the Rev. Thomas Worden, S.T.L., L.S.S., professor of Old Testament at Upholland College, has agreed to take over the editorship. It is exactly ten years since the inception of the Quarterly. In the early days the editor was himself professor in a college but since 1949 he has been engaged in parish work, which has made ever-increasing demands on his time. This has inevitably involved some neglect of Scriptural work, until at last it has become abundantly clear that if justice is to be done to the work, and the aim of the Quarterly to be fulfilled, the appointment of a new editor is necessary. The purpose of the Quarterly has never been in doubt and the present editor is acutely conscious of the gap between purpose and fulfilment. Nevertheless he has been encouraged to continue until now by the realization that the Quarterly does supply to some extent a real need.

We may congratulate ourselves on the acquisition of so able a scholar as Father Worden, who has already proved his worth by several years of solid, painstaking and fruitful work in the field of Holy Scripture. The retiring editor feels that he is handing over the task to one who will give fresh impetus and instil new life into the work begun in 1946. May God bless his endeavour.

"*Family Portrait*". The Catholic viewpoint on Scriptural subjects is heard regrettably seldom and is indeed almost unknown to the majority of our countrymen. This was made only too clear in the controversy that arose over the showing of "Family Portrait" on Television. When His Eminence the Cardinal wrote his letter to *The Times* there was an immediate outcry for a variety of reasons. Some objected to a Roman Catholic ecclesiastic expressing any opinion at all as to what should be shown on Television. Others somewhat more intelligently thought that the play should be judged for its dramatic qualities only. But it was the selection of Easter Sunday of all days in the year which, anyway, made it impossible to ignore its religious character. Its implicit denial of the Resurrection was of course the principal point in this respect, but what was much more

in evidence throughout the play was its portrayal of our Blessed Lady as mother of a large family, thereby contradicting the constant Christian tradition. How far we in this country have travelled from that tradition appeared clearly in the correspondence columns of the newspapers, where it was assumed by very many that the interpretation given in the play was beyond question.

It is indeed on just such a point as this that Catholics would at the present day differ from most others—for while the text of Holy Scripture may be explained in a way perfectly consistent with Mary's perpetual virginity, and though there are many indications of it there for those who have eyes to see, it cannot be claimed that there is any very clear and conclusive proof in the pages of Holy Writ. It is rather to Church tradition that one must turn and here we are on very solid ground, as was made plain by the letters to the papers. But non-Catholics have so frequently and for so long minimized the importance of tradition particularly in the matter of Biblical interpretation that it is difficult for them in a given instance to estimate its value and cogency. Thus for example a certain vicar quotes Mt. 1.25, "knew her not until she had brought forth her first-born", as proving that Mary had subsequent children and adds, "I have often wondered why this fact is ignored in the Roman Catholic church for St Matthew states it quite plainly". The vicar apparently is unaware of or else ignores the constant tradition of the Church concerning Mary's virginity and the interpretation of this text. For every Catholic knows that the word used for "until" implies only exclusion of the act beforehand and says nothing about any subsequent action. Furthermore "first-born" here is used to indicate the rights and obligation that fall to the lot of the first-born, and not to suggest that there were further children. But these points were exhaustively dealt with in the correspondence in the newspapers. Basically, it is a question of how one regards Church tradition and Authority.