

be, in view of the texts which speak of the social character of the kingdom; nor could it contradict these. The fact was that the pharisees had a worldly conception of the kingdom and expected a prodigy announcing its advent. Jesus answers their question, clearly distinguishing the coming of the kingdom from His own final coming which will be visible and accompanied by striking signs (v. 24), by saying that it is there indeed, perceptible but not strikingly so: the reign of God is inaugurated by the preaching of Christ, is in their midst as a proffered grace and can be in their hearts if they will accept it.

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## TRENDS IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

### II

IN a previous article<sup>1</sup> some consideration was given to recent trends in Biblical interpretation for the most part among non-Catholic writers, and attention was drawn to the renewal of interest in the spiritual or typological sense. The subject was taken up by Catholics both in England and in France early in the recent war. The German occupation of France was followed by a remarkable outburst of intellectual activity on the part of the French, and Biblical study had its place in this. Père de Lubac, S.J., one of the most prolific of modern French Catholic writers, has published remarkable introductions to Origen's Homilies on Genesis and on Exodus. His aim is clearly to correct many impressions about Origen which he considers to be false. In his introduction to the Homilies on Genesis<sup>2</sup> de Lubac sets out to disprove the almost universally-held view that Origen not infrequently denies the existence of the literal sense of Scripture. Origen's intense devotion to Christ made him seek a spiritual sense in all Scripture. If he said there were some episodes purely spiritual from which one cannot get any literal sense, he appears only to have meant that one should take the passage as figurative or metaphorical. In other words he confused the terms 'spiritual' and 'figurative'. Or again, when he said that certain Bible episodes were not histories he seems to have meant that they did really happen, but if they had *only* their literal historical meaning there would be no sufficient reason for their happening at all, and we should be obliged to say they never happened. That is, many events of the OT took place chiefly because they were intended by God to prefigure some mystery of the NT, *op. cit.* p. 51. Origen's

<sup>1</sup> See SCRIPTURE, April 1950, p. 175 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Origène, *Homélie sur la Genèse*, in the series: *Sources Chrétiennes*, edited by Pères H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou, S.J.

attempt to interpret the whole of the OT in terms of the New seems to have been the result of its continuous use in the liturgy of the Church. After listening to a reading e.g. from the Book of Numbers, ch. xii, people would ask: What value has this for me? Origen tried to supply an answer. Taken literally, he would say, little or none: but interpreted spiritually it is fruitful. And he went on to interpret the wells, there described, as sources of grace. To the casual observer it certainly looks as if anything can mean anything when Origen deals with it, but we should not overlook the fact which de Lubac strives to underline, that Origen has hold of a profound truth. He views Scripture as a whole: the OT merges into the NT and indeed should as far as possible be interpreted in terms of the New. De Lubac maintains that Origen, without denying the literal sense, always seeks to go beyond it. One passes from history to mystery. This method infuses new life into details otherwise apparently dead. The deeper spiritual meaning of the Old Testament is seen, not by more study but by fulfilment, *Homélie sur l'Exode*, p. 45. Origen nevertheless has a sense of history though admittedly he regards it more as pre-figuring than as preparing. In particular, he uses three methods, (1) Of elucidating the OT by the NT. (2) Elucidating one OT Book by another, and (3) Collecting all the passages where a certain word occurs, irrespective of the wider context, and working out its meaning from them. It is Christ whose coming has made the OT intelligible to us—He has opened the Scriptures for us. If this action of his was necessary to reveal the meaning of the OT, it is no less necessary for us to be converted to Christ if we would discover it, and the understanding of the Scriptures is a gift for which one must prepare oneself, *Hom. sur l'Exode*, p. 68. After explaining the letter of the text one must ask the grace of the Holy Ghost in order to penetrate the mystery. De Lubac admits nevertheless that Origen's own division of senses of Scripture is confusing and artificial, and many of his interpretations devoid of foundation. De Lubac has certainly done a service in bringing the work of Origen once more to the foreground and in dispelling certain misconceptions, though not everyone will follow him all the way in his vindication of the great Alexandrian.

In a remarkable article<sup>1</sup> Père Daniélou underlines the fact that, as Origen teaches, it is the mysteries of Christ rather than the material details of his life which are prefigured in the OT. (The material circumstances are of course foretold as distinct from prefigured.) This is the spiritual exegesis which Origen contrasts with the historical. The whole mystery of Christ is foreshadowed. The typifying of Christ in the mysteries of his life includes the great types such as the Paschal

<sup>1</sup> *Les Divers Sens de l'Écriture*, in *Ephemerides Lovanienses*, April 1948, pp. 119-126.

Lamb, the Brazen Serpent, and the sign of Jonas the prophet. We have here the typological sense at its most significant level. Indeed Daniélou goes so far as to say that one cannot understand Christ unless one understands the OT, for the description of him in the NT is drawn entirely from the OT. One cannot understand the mystery of the Redemption in all its profundity without knowing something of the Paschal Lamb, the sacrifice of the Covenant, the deliverance of Jonas, *art. cit.*, p. 123. This is what typology does: it comments on the mystery of Christ in terms drawn from the OT. This is what the liturgy and the Fathers do. But Christ in this context is the total Christ. It is the mysteries not only of Christ's life but also of the life of his mystical Body, the sacramental life of the Church which are prefigured. As St Matthew uses and gives the authority of his name to what may be called historical exegesis (fulfilment of the literal, historical sense) so sacramental exegesis is essentially Johannine.

The events of Christ's life related by John are in great part figures of sacraments, as for example the marriage feast of Cana, the multiplication of the loaves, the washing of the feet—for the Eucharist; the discourses with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, the miracle at the Pool of Bethesda—for Baptism. But in their turn, these events must be seen against a background of the OT, which is the Exodus from Egypt, with its great 'sacraments'—the Paschal Lamb, the Manna, the water from the rock. Thus the Gospel of St John is a Paschal Catechesis where the Paschal Mystery is unfolded at three levels—figured in the OT, accomplished in the NT, communicated by the Sacraments, pp. 123–4. Origen is a valuable witness to this sacramental exegesis.

But (as de Lubac noted), Origen was speaking to Christians already instructed in the sacraments—and thus his task was principally to deepen their spiritual life. Hence he spent more time on spiritual exegesis than on sacramental. This spiritual exegesis is a legitimate development of typology. Christ indeed can be considered not only in his Person (historical exegesis) or in his Church (sacramental exegesis) but also in the individual soul (spiritual exegesis). Each Christian is a member of Christ who must put on Christ and in whom the mystery of Christ must be accomplished. St Paul employs this method of exegesis when he speaks of the 'azymes of sincerity and truth'. And this is an application in favour among the Fathers, especially those of the School of Alexandria.

Finally, Christ can be considered in his Coming at the end of Time. To this we may give the name of Eschatological exegesis. We have authority for this in Christ's discourse where he himself makes use of the facts of the Flood to describe the end of the world—and in the Apocalypse of St John where the imagery of the Exodus is applied to the events (not now of the sacramental life of the Church, but) of the end of the world. There is an eschatological typology of the Passover,

the Flood, the Fall of Jericho. But it is particularly clearly shown in the symbolism of the Sabbath, figure of the eternal ἀνάπαυσις.<sup>1</sup>

It may be doubted whether this division of senses propounded by Daniélou is really to be preferred to the more traditional division which St Thomas puts forward and which has been in general use since by Catholics. So also may we be slow to accept the suggestion that the typological sense is necessarily Christological in every case, unless we understand 'Christological' in a very general sense, cf. Coppens, *Les Harmonies des Deux Testaments*, p. 88. Yet we should be grateful for the renewed emphasis on the unity of the Testaments.

In a paper entitled 'The Scriptures as Word of God' read at a Conference held at Blackfriars, Oxford, in 1946, and published subsequently in a special number of the *Eastern Churches Quarterly* and also in *Blackfriars*, Dec. 1946, p. 453. Fr Richard Kehoe, O.P., developed the theme that the OT is to be interpreted in the light of the New, if it is still to be for us a living Word of God. So interpreted it contributes to the whole and without it God's message would be incomplete. 'The life of the Church is through assimilation of the whole Bible which is Christ's whole word.' With the coming of Christ the OT is not now obsolete—a collection of proof-texts for the apologist. Christ's word fulfils it—'The glory shines from Christ, but it shines back into the whole of Scripture, making it one glorious body, full of the Holy Spirit'. Thus it is that the spiritual sense of Scripture is established . . . The Scriptures give us the Word of God—Tradition gives us the true sense. By Tradition we mean that instinctive mind of the Church which enables her to handle the Word of God aright. She can unfold all the secrets of Scripture.

Typological exegesis, notes Père Bouyer, an Oratorian, has scarcely been seriously studied in modern times, in consequence of a very understandable reaction against the excesses of patristic and mediæval interpretation—but also because of a certain unconscious rationalism. We are so afraid of indulging in unfounded symbolism that we tend to cut any symbolism to a minimum and admit it only grudgingly. But the fact, he says, is overlooked that—quite apart from the Fathers—the NT is soaked in it. The NT is indeed full of the unity of the two Testaments and this is very largely brought out by means of symbols. This has been fully appreciated by the Church and is developed by the Fathers and above all in the liturgy. A liturgical revival in fact presupposes a Biblical revival, for the liturgy is Biblical from end to end. This Biblical character of the liturgy of course at first arouses no enthusiasm in many hearts because for them Scripture means the Wellhausen theory and

<sup>1</sup> Père Daniélou has followed up this and other articles with a book on the subject which he has named *Sacramentum Futuri* (Paris 1950). His work entitled *Origène, 'le génie du Christianisme'* should also be consulted (Paris 1948).

JEDP, or the Synoptic problem and Q. But what we need is an increase, not of critical but of spiritual understanding. Père Bouyer observes that the spiritual exegesis which is supposed in the liturgy is governed by two principles (1) The OT is the Word of God, not a dead word buried in the past but a living word addressed to man to-day; (2) The OT is clarified by the NT and conversely the depth of the NT is brought out when put in contact with the OT. The link between the two is expressed in figure or allegory, cf. Bouyer, *Liturgie et Exégèse*, in *La Maison Dieu*, no. 7.

The main types of the Old Testament are not and never have been in doubt, and clearly nothing but good can come of our study of the Fathers and the liturgy in an attempt to deepen our understanding of them and the mysteries they signify. For it may be conceded that we are less familiar with these types than many in the early centuries of Christianity. Moreover we have lost the habit of using OT imagery to describe NT truths, as is so constantly done in the liturgy, cf. the Holy Week services. A reading of the OT in the light of the more ample revelation of the New, is what, in the opinion of these modern writers, gives life to the OT and makes its reading spiritually profitable. While they agree that there can be no wholesale or uncritical acceptance of mediæval or patristic exegesis, they do maintain that the Fathers and early writers had a certain insight which we have not, or at least have only very imperfectly, i.e. an ability to see Christ in the OT—and this portrayal of Christ is effected largely by means of symbols. It is this sense of symbolism which we must try to recapture.

There are not wanting of course those who insist that so much of patristic and mediæval exegesis is unsound that it is hardly worth while attempting to sift the wheat from the chaff. This attitude however, tends to overlook the fact that much of this sifting has been done and that there are whole granaries of patristic interpretation open to us if we would but use them.

Others perhaps with more reason may object that there is—after all—little more to investigate. The main types are well known to us and it is difficult to pursue the investigation much beyond them because the application of principles becomes so problematical. Should we not confine ourselves to the great types and figures of the OT and content ourselves with noting their significance? To this it is replied: These great types must of course be the basis or framework of any further investigation. It will be noticed that there are certain groups—e.g., Adam and the Garden of Eden; Noah and the Flood; Moses and the Exodus; Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan. These are what one might term organic allegories, or what Hebert calls *Homologies* (cf. *SCRIPTURE*, April 1950, p. 180). Further investigation might take place within the framework, so to speak, of a particular group. Other details,

it is suggested, might be interpreted typologically, to fit in with the main types already familiar. Always of course there is the general norm or guide for our interpretation, known as the Analogy of Faith, which requires us to accept no interpretation which is at variance with the truths of Faith. If such a line of study is pursued we need not of course expect to find any new doctrine. It is rather emphasis and new life which is being sought by those who favour this investigation: 'Thus illumined by the liturgy and patristic tradition, the reading of the Bible will in its turn revivify the smallest liturgical allusions with a great fund of Scriptural experience, pulsating with life', Bouyer, *art. cit.*

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## QUESTION AND ANSWER

*Why does verse 3 of Psalm 2 appear in inverted commas in the New Latin Psalter and in Fr C. Lattey's Westminster Version, as though the words were spoken by the rebels? It seems more obviously to be the decision of the psalmist to break the bonds and cast off the cords of those rulers and kings who resist God. And this is how St Augustine interprets the verse in his second sermon on the Ascension, as given in the second nocturn of the Sunday after that feast: 'Omnes enim quasi quibusdam compedibus nos premunt, et peccatorum nos retibus ligare contendunt; et ideo cum adiutorio Dei, secundum quod ait Psalmista: Dirumpamus vincula eorum . . .'*

The present Holy Father reminds us of the importance of establishing the literal sense of Scripture first. In this Psalm, the nations are subject to Yahweh and his Anointed; but a rebellion is being fomented. The nations are mustering armies with the intention of breaking away from the rule of the Anointed which they regard as no better than bondage. The universal character of the rule here described seems to exclude the possibility that the Anointed might refer to a king of Israel, in particular, David, and there is no discernible reference to contemporary events. The Anointed mentioned in verse 2 is therefore Jesus Christ. As elsewhere in the Psalms, his rule is depicted in very material terms as though he were a temporal ruler. In verse 3 we might expect to read 'his bonds' i.e. imposed by the Anointed of Yahweh. But Israel is conceived as being with the Anointed and sharing with him his rule over the nations. Indeed the Jews of the post-exilic period took it for granted that Israel would dominate the nations in the Messianic age, and even the Apostles after the Resurrection seem to have shared this misconception, Acts i, 6.