

cultures from which our Pentateuch came and towards the primitive revelation of which it speaks?

Mohenjo Daro and Harappa were deserted at the same time, and this would seem true of other sites, as Chanhu Daro and Amri, where remains of the Indus culture have been found. But what force brought to so sudden an end a society so well-established can only be the subject of conjecture. The more recent levels show what may be signs of racial decadence, while groups of skeletons displaying evidence of violence, and the fact that all statuary is broken, might suggest conquest by a very hostile race. . . . The name itself, Mohenjo Daro, the Hill of Death, may enshrine some such long-lost tradition.

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P R E S E N T I N G T H E N E W T E S T A M E N T

THERE are before me three books: *The Scripture Textbooks for Catholic Schools*, edited by Mgr John M. T. Barton, and published by Burns Oates and Washbourne.¹ They are uniform and each costs 4/6. The binding is very good for the price.

The foreword by Cardinal Griffin states the fundamental point: 'So many people are taught all about the Scriptures, but few are taught to read them'. That set me thinking. It is certain that an inconsiderable number do read the New Testament. Our aim is to persuade them. There is no need for persuasion with the children; they take what is given them by their masters. So the first question arises: do three more books on the New Testament make it more or less likely that the people who read them will read the New Testament itself? Many times I have set about reading, particularly the Old Testament, and found myself very soon reading a commentary instead. Will these books have the same effect on the children?

To begin with the Lives of our Lord. One is for small children, but is so written that it could be read with pleasure by a person of any age; the other is for school children in their teens. The method employed in both is to make a straightforward account of the life of our Lord drawn from all four Gospels, with occasional digressions and enlargements on local history, geography, liturgy, and so on. They both read easily and have a telling style, but not so telling as that of the New Testament writers, for these have a brevity and

¹*A Short Life of Our Lord*, by Patrick J. Crean, Ph.D.

A Study of the Gospels, by the Rev. Thomas Bird, D.D., Ph.D.

The Church in the New Testament, by the Rev. Sebastian Bullough,

O.P., M.A., S.T.L.

economy of words truly breath-taking, while the use of direct speech in the New Testament is so much more suitable to children than the indirect which both these authors favour. Nothing pleases children more than the dramatic style.

It follows from the fact that the story is all there that these books will be read *instead* of the Gospels. And there is a further danger. As they both tell the same story, children twice in their school career will have much the same facts to study. It is so much better to read first one Gospel, say St Luke, and then another, preferably St John. We have here, not notes on the Gospels with the Sacred text appended, but a harmony in the words of Dr Crean or Dr Bird. Consequently, a child reading the text of the New Testament would find them very difficult for use as reference. Indeed they do not set out to solve the textual problems, nor do they use Mgr Knox's translation. Why have they abandoned the New Testament text with footnotes and appendices for larger subjects?

This is not to say that no one should ever attempt to retell the story of our Lord's life. But perhaps, unless the imaginative approach is used, the best method is the Gospels themselves, with a few well chosen comments. The imaginative approach has its advantages even for children, but more especially for grown-up people who (many of them) have got so accustomed to the narrative in its old dress that it glides over them without having an appreciable effect. It is useful also for those who cannot be persuaded to take up their Bibles unless their imaginations have first been stirred. The books by Mr H. V. Morton, Miss Dorothy Sayers, and others have done splendid work on these lines.

Dr Bird in his preface writes, 'The text of the Gospels is not enough for us, we need a running commentary to explain it'. No one would disagree with that statement; but what both he and Dr Crean have done is to give us, not a commentary exactly, but the story over again, filled out here and there with explanatory matter. In justice to Dr Bird it must be said that it appears his commentary has been cut instead of the story. It would have been much more useful had he enlarged the commentary at the expense of the story, and so forced the student back to the original texts. But that may not be his fault.

Nevertheless both these Lives have been carefully and beautifully written. The Passion as described by Dr Crean is especially well constructed. Both books are admirably illustrated with photographs of the Holy Land, with maps and diagrams, and at a low price, for which we are very grateful. Dr Bird's volume has an introductory section of some thirty odd pages in which he lucidly summarises the

important points, such for instance as the synoptic problem, the Parables, miracles, and so forth. There is a good bibliography at the end of that volume, which would seem to be by Mgr Barton and not by Dr Bird, but there is no index.

We now come to the third volume under review. 'The Church in the New Testament' by Fr Sebastian Bullough, O.P. And this, so it appears to the present writer, has been planned correctly, if the principle is to be admitted of having a commentary in a separate volume from the text. It begins with the historical background—and in that his two fellow contributors of the other volumes agree—then follows the exegesis, section by section, each section divided into three parts: (A), the significance of the passage; (B), the story—this should have been very considerably cut; and (C), details, or short notes on specific points. Then, on many occasions, the author has added what he terms 'Interludes' or what boys might have termed 'red herrings'. These are three or four pages on important theological, historical, or liturgical points, which naturally crop up through the reading of the text. Thus we have, the unity of the Church, religious poverty, the later life of St John the Apostle. The only criticism one might make would be that the style is a little too like class room style at times, for instance pp. 88 ff: a split infinitive on p. 88, a strange 'so' or two on p. 89, and 'anyway' on page 90.

The book concludes with some elaborate and useful indices. This is undoubtedly a very helpful contribution to our manuals, especially for the teacher; it is full of learning displayed in an orderly and pleasant manner.

In conclusion the reviewer wishes to state that he has found it an uncongenial task to be so destructive in part of his criticism of two of these works, more especially as they are clearly the product of much loving labour. As Cardinal Griffin pointed out also in his Foreword, Scripture lesson should be directed to knowing our Lord himself; and even if these books are not the *ipsissima verba* of the New Testament they are very near it, and should lead many to know, love, and imitate their Divine Master, Jesus Christ.

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