

# **Freed To Inspire: A Lecture on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2010, to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the English Catholic Biblical Association**

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The decision to found a Catholic Biblical Association was taken at the Easter meeting in 1940 of the Conference of Higher Studies, an annual gathering of Catholic teachers of tertiary education. The Chairman was to be Fr Cuthbert Lattey SJ of Heythrop, the Secretary was Fr Reginald Fuller. Cuthbert Lattey, in whose honour Reggie Fuller founded the series of Lattey Lectures, died in 1954. Reggie himself, at the age of 102, is still enjoying a bright and vivacious retirement, and has supplied me with many reminiscences. However, it has fallen to me, sometime Chairman of the CBA and until recently Chairman of the Trustees, to deliver this birthday lecture, a survey of Catholic biblical scholarship in England during the twentieth century.

I have called the lecture 'Freed to Inspire'. At the beginning of the century the reaction to the Catholic Modernist movement stifled and shackled biblical scholarship to the extent that any biblical scholar had to exercise extreme caution in making any open statement at all. Those of us who remember taking the Anti-Modernist oath (I myself took it four times in the two years 1963-1965, at subdiaconate, priesthood, and Licences in theology and scripture) will be aware of its fulminations against unorthodox teachings. To prescind from other countries, whose stories must be sketched by others, the story of Catholic biblical scholarship in England in the twentieth century is one of courageous and heroic endeavour to liberate from fear and ignorance, and enable the scriptures to become once again a respected and inspiring resource for Christians. In this the CBA and its founders played a vital part.

## **1. Framework**

The stable background against which this work was done was the great Roman encyclicals and teaching on the Bible, which, with their dates, I may list. They provide a framework for our story, as each of them set off a new phase in biblical studies.

1893 *Providentissimus Deus*. The eighteenth century began with the rationalist Enlightenment. Seeming further threats to traditional Christian beliefs were the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and the archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia. So it was reasonable that Leo XIII, instead of merely issuing another Syllabus of Errors, should encourage a return to the sources, and a renewed study of scripture. This fitted the context of the great international Catholic conferences at Brussels (1894), Fribourg (1897) and Munich (1900). Scarcely a dozen years later, however, this positive atmosphere was, as we will soon see, shattered by the panic-reaction to the Modernist Movement.

1943 *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. Some forty years later the signal to begin opening windows, if not doors, was given by this encyclical of Pius XII. The Crisis itself was passed, though it was not for another dozen years (1955) that two articles sponsored by the Secretary and Subsecretary of the Pontifical Commission authorized the putting aside of the paralyzing decrees issued by the Commission in the years following the Crisis (1905-1918).

1965 *Dei Verbum*. This central Constitution of the Second Vatican Council gave the positive and confident encouragement for biblical studies which was necessary to enable them to flourish unhindered within the guidance of the Church. This had been heralded in the immediately preceding time (1964) by the important document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on the Historical Truth of the Gospels. It was all the more important in that it reversed the cautious and negative *Monitum* on the historicity of the Gospels from the Holy Office issued as the Council was imminent (1961).

## **2. Setting the Scene: the Catholic Modernist Crisis**

Now, to move to the English scene, first of all I need to sketch the atmosphere of Catholic scholarship in which the founders of the CBA found themselves. In 1907, in response to the Catholic Modernist Movement, and in particular in response to Alfred Loisy's theories, the Holy Office issued a list of Modernist Errors (*Lamentabili*, July 1907). Some of these were drawn from the writings of Alfred Loisy. More frighteningly, others were distortions and perhaps deliberate misunderstandings of what Loisy had said. This was swiftly followed

(September 1907) by the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis*. These papal documents, followed by a series of inhibiting *Responsa* from the newly established Biblical Commission, imposed a strait-jacket on biblical research. Before *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943 the parameters within which Catholic biblical scholarship had to operate were set by these fourteen *Responsa* of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, on such introductory matters as historicity, authorship and date of various books of the Bible. They were designed to repress erroneous teaching rather than to forward positive research. The expressed purpose of the foundation of the Commission had been to further exegesis by means of the most modern methods, with the secondary objective that the texts ‘be kept safe not only from every breath of error but also from all ill-considered opinions’. For some years it was the latter objective that prevailed.

The tone of the Commission may be judged by its endorsement of opinions which no modern biblical scholar would accept. Indeed, any responsible biblical scholar would surely go exactly in the direction forbidden by these *Responsa*. For example:

1. ‘It is proved by solid historical argument that the Apostle John and no other must be acknowledged as the author of the fourth Gospel’, and ‘the discourses are properly and truly the discourses of the Lord himself, rather than theological compositions of the writer, placed on the lips of the Lord’ (May 1907).
2. There are no ‘solid arguments to prove that the Book of Isaiah must be attributed not to Isaiah alone but to two or even more authors’ (June 1908).
3. Most notorious of all was the response in the following year on Genesis 1-3, asserting that these narratives ‘refer to objective, historical reality’, and that it may not even be taught that ‘they contain fables derived from the mythologies and cosmologies of ancient peoples, which the sacred author has purified of all polytheistic error and adjusted to agree with monotheistic teaching’ (June 1909).

### **3. English Catholic Biblical Scholarship before 1940**

This was the background against which Catholic scholars were obliged to operate. I must obviously be selective. I propose to sketch some portraits of the principal protagonists of the CBA and their scholarly work.

We must begin with Fr Lattey himself, the first chairman of the CBA. In his long teaching career, from 1911 till 1954 he lectured indefatigably,<sup>1</sup> but his writing seems to have been chiefly for the CTS.<sup>2</sup> He was also an organiser, founding not only the CBA but, much earlier, in 1919-20, the Catholic Conference for Higher Studies. He himself regarded the Westminster Version of the scriptures as his most important achievement, and perhaps it is. The idea of making a translation of the New Testament from the Greek seems to have sprung from two articles by Fr Joseph Keating SJ, editor of *The Month*, in 1908. It was taken up by Lattey in 1913, only a couple of years after his appointment as Professor of Scripture at St Beuno's. There seem to have been only two Catholic translations into English beforehand from the Greek, and these only of the gospels (in 1836 and 1898), so not including Lattey's beloved Paul.

The strait-jacket in which Catholic interpreters were held and the audacity of the project become clear from the preface to the first trial piece, the translation of 1-2 Thessalonians. Its preface begins with a justification for departing from the Vulgate as a base, for the Vulgate had again been declared by the Biblical Commission to be the 'authentic' version of the scriptures. Appendix I shows how important it was to go behind the somewhat faulty text of the Vulgate. It presents a spirited defence for a departure from the Vulgate text in 1 Cor 15.51, where Jerome retained the negative ('We shall not all be changed') from the Old Latin. When Trent confirmed the Vulgate as 'authentic', explains Lattey, it did not mean to approve all the readings it adopted, merely that the Vulgate contained no heresy (p. 222). On another and more theological issue the Westminster Bible attracted the attention and correction of the Biblical Commission in 1915. Lattey's note on 1 Thess 4.15 states firmly that Paul expected the Second Coming to be in his own lifetime. The Commission rejected this interpretation, to which Lattey responded in a second edition by printing the verdict in an Appendix and inserting a cheeky note in the text,

On St Paul's evident expectation that he himself would see the final end, see the Appendix; where note is also taken of an ingenious attempt lately made to avoid the necessity of considering the Apostle unenlightened on this point.

He did not easily abandon his opinions! Other translators in the Westminster Bible were less bold, e.g. in the case of the Book of Jonah

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<sup>1</sup> His lectures tended to be somewhat disorganised. A colleague used them as an example to differentiate Inspiration from Revelation: 'Your lectures are certainly a revelation, but no one would say that they are an inspiration' (Obituary).

<sup>2</sup> His CTS pamphlet on Revelation sold 192,000 copies.

(TE Bird of Oscott, 1938): after a full discussion of the different opinions on the literary genre of Jonah, the translator concludes ‘maybe the most probable after all is the simple historical interpretation’, with a postscript of a ‘well authenticated report of a whale in whose stomach a ten-foot shark was found intact’ (p. xxxiii). A modern scholar would class the Book of Jonah as satire in a historical framework, a typical Jewish self-critical joke, poking fun at Jewish complacency and the assumption that God’s mercy was for Jews alone. One can guess Lattey’s views from his strong prefatory note dissociating himself from opinions adopted by the collaborators. The Westminster Bible New Testament is handsomely printed and well furnished with notes (often about one-fifth of the page). However, it was published in four volumes, which must have decreased its appeal, though a single-volume edition was published in 1947.

The notes are firm and uncompromising. One note I particularly approve is in Romans (Vol 3, p. 75) on the translation of *dikaiousune*, justifying ‘justness’:

It is, of course, a good English word, as may be seen in the Oxford *English Dictionary*; and while it does not bear the strong legal connotation that makes the term ‘justice’ undesirable, it still retains the etymological connection with ‘just’, ‘justice’, etc., which is so important for the following of the Apostle’s thought.

For all the scholarship that went into the Westminster Bible I would, however, suggest that the Cambridge Summer Schools of Catholic Studies were even more important. These were organized by the Catholic Conference of Higher Studies. It must be remembered that at this time no Catholic could study theology at an English University, whose teachers were exclusively non-Catholic. There was, therefore, a complete divide between Catholic and non-Catholic theological studies and students.<sup>3</sup> The best minds among the teachers of higher studies were confined to teaching in the Seminaries, such as Heythrop, Oscott, St Edmund’s Ware, Upholland, Ushaw. I attended one session of this Catholic Conference of Higher Studies in the late 1950s, but do not know what happened to it after that; theological faculties at the universities were soon to open their doors to Catholics. The Summer Schools continued till 1939, being ended by the outbreak of war. Each year the lectures were organized and the texts edited and published by Fr Lattey. The first, on *The Religion of the Scriptures*, is typical of his style. His obituary, written by someone who

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<sup>3</sup> Lattey did, however, do a fifth year at Oxford after Greats, studying Hebrew under S.R. Driver, and taking part in one of the seminars of the great Sir John Hawkins which eventually led to his *Horae Synopticae*.

obviously loved him, ‘so provocative of mimicry’, speaks of his love of a good argument and his dogged perseverance. So the volume concludes with an Appendix against Dr Coulton’s pamphlet, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Bible*. Dr Coulton seems to have made a Kingsleyesque attack on the honesty of Catholic scholars in general and Fr Lattey in particular, in continuing to accept the authenticity of the passage about the three heavenly witnesses in 1 John 5.7, in obedience to a ‘special Papal decree of 1897’ and despite the overwhelming textual evidence to the contrary. Lattey bullishly replies to every detail of the accusation, concluding with obvious satisfaction, ‘I hope, therefore, that I have made it clear that Catholic scholars may and do treat the passage as an interpolation, and that the accusation of dishonesty made against them is without foundation’ (p. 109). In his own essay in this volume, on Inspiration, he goes as far as could be done in the teeth of the *Responsa* by saying that the first ten chapters of Genesis are indeed historical, ‘real history but metaphorically told’ (p. 13). They are FACTS ‘clothed to some extent in symbolic phraseology’ (p. 13) – whatever this may mean! In his essay in the second volume on the Eucharist, he similarly clearly enjoys taking up the cudgels against Dean Farrer, dismissing Farrer’s interpretation as wholly unjustified (p. 4). The final session of the Cambridge Summer Schools was in July 1939, and the foundation of the CBA was decided at Easter 1940, perhaps as a sort of replacement.

Before we come to the actual foundation of the CBA two other members of the team working for the renewal of biblical studies deserve mention. One is the Dominican Hugh Pope, the other the Jesuit Edmund Sutcliffe. Hugh Pope is the first Englishman I have discovered who took the examinations in Sacred Scripture before the newly established Biblical Commission. After theological studies at Louvain he took the Licenciature in 1908 and the Doctorate in the following year, immediately after which he was appointed to teach scripture at the newly founded Angelicum in Rome. His doctorate was on *The Date of the Book of Deuteronomy*, a complicated and controversial subject. I have not been able to obtain a copy of this Roman publication, but it would be fascinating to see how he faced the inquisitorial Commission on this delicate subject. He lasted only two years at the Angelicum before returning to England, where he pursued an extraordinarily active apostolate as writer and preacher for the next 35 years, moving between the Dominican houses of Hawkesyard, Woodchester and Oxford. Despite being the only member of the team with full academic credentials his speciality seems to have been at the lower end of the academic scale. He was a founder member of that fine Dominican apostolate, the Catholic Evidence Guild, and he also wrote a host of pamphlets for the Catholic Truth Society. His most lasting

contribution was the *Catholic Student's Aids to the Bible*, begun in 1914 and running through a series of editions till the outbreak of the Second World War. With his Roman background it is perhaps less surprising that Hugh Pope was fiercely controversial against non-Catholic writings, a note that runs through his *Aids to the Bible*. On the first page of his Introduction (immediately after a full transcript of *Providentissimus Deus* he writes,

It is true that there are in existence many admirable books on the Bible written by non-Catholics. But these all labour under a twofold defect. In the first place, non-Catholics can never regard the Bible in the same way as we do. For them the Bible is the Living Word of God, and each is at liberty to interpret it as he pleases. For us, on the contrary, the Bible is not the Living Word; it is God's Word, it is true, but it is not the speaking word which needs no Interpreter; it is given us by the Church (p. xli, 1913 edition; p. ix 1926 edition).

His stance throughout is careful defence of the Roman position and of the right of the Church to interpret the Bible. The same tone is evident in his *The Catholic Church and the Bible* (1926), especially in the Editor's Preface, purporting to be signed by the series editor, Hilaire Belloc,<sup>4</sup> who describes him as 'our principal English scholar and authority in these things' (p. 9). Half-a-dozen years after his death in 1946 the *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* mourns him as 'one of the pioneers of Catholic Biblical scholarship in this country' (p. viii).

The other early scholar to whom we must pay tribute is Fr Edmund Sutcliffe SJ. He also studied scripture in Rome for three years, 1922-1926, after which he taught scripture for 35 years, first at St Beuno's and then at Heythrop. He was the Old Testament member of the group, and seems to have put all his energies into the oral teaching of scripture rather than publishing. He himself wrote only four books, though he was also editor of the important Bellarmine Series, a dozen books, mostly by Frederick Copleston on philosophy. He was the last of the great old men to remain active, working to within two months of his death in 1963. Having been Old Testament editor for the *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* published in 1952, he clearly expected to remain in that position for the second edition. Bernard Orchard, the editor-in-chief, wrote to him on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1956 courteously, and hopefully, 'P.S. If you decide to retire we should of course invite another Jesuit father to represent the

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<sup>4</sup> I say 'purporting' for the language and style of the preface are wholly unBellocian and almost identical *verbatim* with Pope's other writings.

Society on the Committee’. Ten days later Orchard wrote to Reggie Fuller, rather nettled that ‘Suttie himself is clearly determined to stay put’ as OT Editor. And so he did!

#### 4. The Catholic Biblical Association

However, I am jumping ahead. At the 1940 annual meeting of the Conference of Higher Studies the decision was taken to found a CBA, with Cuthbert Lattey as Chairman and a new entrant on the scene as Secretary, Reginald Fuller, now at 32, teaching at St Edmund’s Ware.<sup>5</sup> Present at the meeting also was another new entrant, Dom Bernard Orchard, now teaching scripture at Downside Abbey, ordained priest for less than a year, but already the author of an article in *Biblica*,<sup>6</sup> the prestigious<sup>7</sup> periodical of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. This article followed a hint from his scripture teacher, Abbot John Chapman, who began the long Downside tradition to which Bernard adhered indefatigably throughout his life, on the priority of Matthew’s Gospel. Bernard was an *entrepreneur* rather than a scholar,<sup>8</sup> but in the intervals of being housemaster at Downside and headmaster at St Benedict’s, Ealing, galvanized others into successful scholarly endeavours.

I have no absolutely contemporary document which defines the original purpose of the CBA. The Trust was not set up until 1955, when it was stated, with fine regard for chronology, that the CBA was founded ‘to further the aims of the Sovereign Pontiffs as set out in’ *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. In the Trust document the more detailed aims are stated to be ‘to promote interest by the Catholic laity of Great Britain in the Holy Scriptures’ by magazines, lectures, films, Catholic commentaries on Holy Scripture, text-books for schools, sermons and ‘group-study schools’. There is no mention of original or higher research, but simply of objectives which were known at the time as *haute vulgarisation*, the diffusion among the laity of such knowledge as existed, rather than pushing further the boundaries of knowledge with new research and discoveries. The CBA has remained true to this objective, the only flight of fancy into higher studies being Bernard Orchard’s campaign for the priority of Matthew.

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<sup>5</sup> Reggie taught at St Edmund’s Ware 1936-1949. He was Secretary of the CBA 1948-1965, and then Chairman 1968-1982. Between these two periods he was the first Professor of Old Testament at the new Catholic University of East Africa in Nairobi. He was also general editor of the <sup>2</sup>Catholic Commentary and of the Catholic RSV.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Thessalonians and the Synoptic Gospels’, *Biblica* 1938, p.19-42.

<sup>7</sup> Compare B.C. Butler, *The originality of Matthew* (Cambridge: CUP, 1951).

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps his most astonishing entrepreneurial achievement was to secure a grant of nearly half a million DM from a commercial foundation ‘in order to promote recognition in the Church of the primacy of the Gospel of Matthew’.

Since this sally was an isolated phenomenon, I deal with it now, out of chronological order. From his earliest scripture studies,<sup>9</sup> the energetic and tenacious Bernard was imbued with the conviction that Matthew was the earliest of the gospels. This conviction was reinforced by respect for the traditional view, and Bernard was convinced that he was defending the essential tradition of the Church against attack by German liberals. He also somehow linked this view of the priority of Matthew with the conviction that the gospel of Mark grew out of five discourses of Peter, given in Rome and taken down by his interpreter, Mark. Perhaps I may indulge in a delightful pen-portrait of the man, written in a rather exasperated tone by his travelling-companion Hubert Richards on a great tour in 1960 of the lands of St Paul, shortly before Bernard turned over the Land Rover in which they were travelling:

When he makes an overnight stop he has out his suitcase, his grip, the case with film equipment, his shoulderbag and his typewriter. Makes you scream. As leader he also tends to stand around while the others unpack and pack. He constantly changes his mind, and works his decision out loud, weighing alternatives and dithering from one to another. This is exasperating enough, but when he finishes on a conclusion and half an hour later decides on the alternative again, you want to scream. His driving is sheer murder – and at times St Christopher has a heavy job on hand. He tortures the engine, often racing along in 3<sup>rd</sup> without realising he should be in 4<sup>th</sup>, and going uphill for hours in first till you think the bottom is going to drop out. He loves sightseeing from the driving seat, so that while he is gaily pointing out some distant hill on the right, the car is wandering dangerously to the left, and twice we have been off the road. He can't reverse without stalling and just about murders the starting button to get the machine going again. And when he does back, he looks dead in front and just hopes we hit nothing. 2 walls have dented our rear.

In 1976 Professor Bill Farmer of the Southern Methodist University at Dallas published his *The Synoptic Problem, a critical analysis*. Farmer revived the Griesbach Hypothesis, put forward in 1776 by Griesbach, the first author of a Greek synopsis of the gospels. Bernard seized on this, and the two of them embarked on a campaign in favour of Matthean priority and against the prevalent Two-Source Theory. With his towering Benedictine figure Bernard was a much-loved personality of the Society for New Testament Studies. He was also a successful money-raiser. With

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<sup>9</sup> At Fitzwilliam House he read Economics and History. It is significant of his tenacity that he was also President of the College Athletics Club.

these two advantages he laid on a series of international conferences to promote the Griesbach Hypothesis, at which he prevailed on numbers of highly distinguished scholars to give papers.<sup>10</sup> His thesis, which he named the Two-Gospel Hypothesis, was that Matthew was the first to be written, and that Mark was the last, a synthesis of Matthew and Luke. Although this theory flew in the face of all received contemporary orthodoxy, such was Orchard's vigour, authority and charm that he succeeded in gaining it an almost-reputable place in discussion. It also gained him an honorary doctorate from the University of Dallas. Such was the affection in which he was held by the scholarly community that few were willing to dispute with him face-to-face. On one occasion he was delighted to hear that a German friend has described his lecture as *ganz fantastisch*, unaware that this meant 'pure fantasy'.

This sally of Bernard's into original research was an isolated phenomenon in the story of the CBA; we must return to the main subject. The war imposed a delay on all but the most essential activities. From the point of view of biblical studies the important event was the second of the landmark encyclicals, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), which at last began to put an end to the fear of condemnation for Modernism. I say 'began', for my own initial monastic scripture teacher in 1953, when he taught us that the early stories of Genesis were not historical, still felt he needed to forbid us to reveal this to the community. Raymond Brown went so far as to call the encyclical the 'Magna Charta of biblical studies'.<sup>11</sup> When translated from its quaint 'Pope-speak' into ordinary language, and stripped of its ornate praise for former papal pronouncements, it seems to me to encourage principally four approaches: the return to the original texts in their original languages, a firm grasp of textual criticism, and a judicious use of the 'spiritual' sense of scripture as well as the literal sense (#26). Above all it recommends the study of modes of writing current in the ancient near East (#35-38). The work of this encyclical was still to be completed or applied by three other liberating Roman pronouncements, which are indeed no more than an application of its teachings:

1. The famous letter to Cardinal Suhard in 1948, which picked up the encouragement of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* to 'grapple again and again with difficult problems', and declared that the earlier

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<sup>10</sup> Among them Philip Alexander, David Aune, Peder Borgen, James Dunn, Birger Gerhardsson, Ulrich Luz, Jorge Mejia (later Cardinal and Prefect of the Vatican Library), Bruce Metzger, Peter Stuhlmacher, Shemaryahu Talmon, Christopher Tuckett.

<sup>11</sup> In *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), p. 1167.

*responsa* were ‘in no way opposed to further scientific examination of these problems’.

2. In 1955 the Secretary and the Subsecretary of the Commission stated that these earlier *responsa* were no longer binding.
3. Finally by the last document of the old Pontifical Biblical Commission before it was re-formed, *The Historical Truth of the Gospels* (1964), which officially opened up Catholic gospel study to the researches of the last half-century.

The end of the war ushered in what might be called the great period of the English CBA. It was marked by four publications:

1. In January 1946 appeared the first issue of *Scripture* under the editorship of Reggie Fuller (price one shilling=5p); it eventually changed its name to *Scripture Bulletin* and has recently gone on-line.

2. The production of a single-volume *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* had already been projected in 1942.<sup>12</sup> At the time the only single-volume commentary on the Bible in English was Peake, published in 1928, so both antiquated and non-Catholic. The *Catholic Commentary* was eventually published in 1953 under the editorship of Sutcliffe, Fuller, Orchard and Ralph Russell. It was a highly significant achievement, though fifty years later, it was brutally described by Joseph Fitzmyer as ‘horribly out of date from the day of its first publication’.<sup>13</sup> He does, however, admit that Raymond Brown was forced to use it as a textbook because there was no alternative. The Commentary was published a decade after *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, but still two years before the *Responsa* of the Biblical Commission were withdrawn. It may well, therefore, have gone as far as it could towards accepting the assured conclusions of non-Catholic modern scholarship. On Isaiah, for instance (or rather ‘Isaias’ in the Latinate spelling still retained in Catholic circles) it accepts that the final edition of the Book was produced by a post-exilic author. However, to explain how the second part of the Book clearly echoes a post-exilic situation it has to resort to the desperate solution, ‘Unlike other prophets, Isaias may have received a special charism by virtue of which he lived in spirit in these periods’ (p. 541)

3. By that time a new project was already on the boil, a Catholic edition of the newly published Revised Standard Version, to replace the antique Rheims-Douai-Challoner Version and the brilliant but idiosyncratic Knox translation, the two versions of the Bible commonly used by English

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<sup>12</sup> Bernard Orchard, *My Biblical Apostolate 1933-2000*, p. 4

<sup>13</sup> J. Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture* (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist, 2008), p. 104

Catholics. This involved complicated negotiations with the copyright-holders, the National Council of Christian Churches of the USA, in which Bernard was in his element. It was an especially important initiative from the ecumenical viewpoint, startlingly open a decade before Vatican II. The main ‘Catholic’ element was, of course, the inclusion of the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical passages in their due order in the Old Testament. There were also a very few changes in translation and a few notes on Catholic interpretations of the text. Owing to the death of Cardinal Griffin and subsequent shilly-shallying by the English bishops, it was eventually published only in 1966, with an *imprimatur* from Cardinal Grey of Edinburgh.

4. In the same year came the publication of *The Jerusalem Bible* under the direction of Alexander Jones, professor of scripture at Upholland, not without some delicate exchanges of letters between Jones and Orchard about the overlap between the two projects.<sup>14</sup> This was to be the first translation of the whole Bible into modern English, for at least the Old Testament of the RSV was still notably archaic in style. It had the major advantage of the extensive theological and historical notes, incorporating the best of reliable Catholic scholarship. Jones’ primary aim had been to make available for the English-speaking public the important theological advances of the introductions and notes to the *Bible de Jérusalem*, published by the French *Ecole biblique* in Jerusalem, but he soon discovered that a new translation was necessary to support them. Neither of the two versions current among Catholics (Rheims-Douai and Knox) could carry the notes, and Protestant versions were still forbidden for Catholics. So for the translation Jones enrolled a formidable list of figures well-known in the English literary world, such as Edward Sackville West, Robert Speaight<sup>15</sup> and J R R Tolkien. The second edition, *The New Jerusalem Bible*, was of course edited by me in the early 1980s, ensuring fidelity to the original languages and bringing up-to-date the introductions and notes. By that time they were considerably out-of-date, for in the original *Jerusalem Bible* they were taken from the French edition of 1956. Every change from the French had to be individually fought for against the formidable conservatism of P. Benoit, who remained Director of the Jerusalem Bible project as a whole.

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<sup>14</sup> Under the charismatic leadership of Alec Jones and Tom Worden, Upholland was an outstanding centre of renewal of biblical studies in the post-war years. Besides inspiring generations of priests with a love of the scriptures, Alec Jones particularly made excellent use of the advice to be aware of the biblical modes of writing, in such books as *Unless Some Man Show Me* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1950), and *God’s Living Word* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961). Tom Worden’s *The Psalms are Christian Prayer* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962) is a classic.

<sup>15</sup> Who once told me that he translated the 66 chapters of the Book of Isaiah from the French in two weeks. The fullest account of the genesis of *The Jerusalem Bible* is given by Jones’ nephew, Anthony Kenny, in his autobiography, *A Path from Rome* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985), p. 115-123.

The end of this post-war tidal wave of new initiatives may be marked by the second and revised edition of the Catholic commentary, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*. This was already projected as early as 1956, but publication was delayed till 1969 by various factors, not least of which was Orchard's re-appointment as headmaster of the school of St Benedict's, Ealing. The delays to publication were protracted and left many of the articles 'dead in the water'. There was some new blood, such as Joe Blenkinsopp, Jerome Murphy O'Connor and Wilfrid Harrington. On the other hand, Bishop Butler's article on the synoptic problem, revised from the first edition, still espouses his defence of the priority of Matthew, although he told me four years previously, in 1964, that he had long abandoned this position. Some of the articles (e.g. on Romans) were barely retouched, even containing the same tired bibliographical references, now forty years old. It is tempting to say that the single most significant revision was the removal of the warning asterisk from non-Catholic works in the bibliographies, for this signalled a fresh approach whereby non-Catholic scholarship was seen to be fully acceptable – though, of course, not to be accepted uncritically any more than other scholarship.

Fresh from my Roman degree, I had the good fortune to be called in at the last moment<sup>16</sup> and wrote articles on Matthew, Mark and Acts, as well as various introductory pieces. I remember that I wrote the 32,000-word article on Matthew from start to finish in less than a month over the Christmas period. The revised commentary was deservedly sidelined by the simultaneous publication of the *Jerome Commentary on Holy Scripture*. This marked a sharp shift of initiative to the other side of the Atlantic where such a fine band of Catholic scripture scholars, led by Raymond Brown and Joseph Fitzmyer, were coming into their own. They have continued to lead the field, with such noble achievements as the *Sacra Pagina* commentary series and the Anchor Bible project, now controlled by John Collins.

### **5. Vatican II and *Dei Verbum***

By this time the great work of Vatican II had already been done. Of course it takes some time for such important matters to be absorbed and to become effective. If I were pressed to isolate the four most important achievements of the Council from the viewpoint of scripture I would boldly say:

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<sup>16</sup> In fact it turned out to be four years before publication. I was in fact asked to write the first article while I was waiting outside the examination-room for my final oral examination.

1. The emphasis from the beginning of *Dei Verbum* that revelation is the gift of God in friendship, to which we must respond in faith and love:

In his love God chose to reveal himself in order to invite us into his friendship.

The plan of salvation is expressed both in God's deeds throughout the history of salvation and in the words which make clear the mystery contained in them.

By the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to respond to this revelation with the obedience of faith, which moves the heart and opens the eyes of the mind (*Dei Verbum* #2, 5).

The seeds of this idea are visible already in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, but its re-statement here, together with the stress in *Lumen Gentium* on the vocation to holiness of the whole people of God, has helped to make Catholics and indeed all Christians aware of the importance of the prayerful reading of scripture. Building on this, there has been a proliferation in the Church of study-groups, study-days and individual commitment to *lectio divina*. At any meeting of the CBA it becomes clear that all those who teach scripture are constantly called upon to encourage such reading by giving talks, leading seminars, etc, particularly at parish level. At parish level also this and the liturgical renewal have contributed to making the Prayer of the Church, with its use of the psalms and scriptural readings an extension of the Eucharist, or in cases of need a substitute for the Eucharist.

In the sacred books the heavenly Father meets his children with great love and speaks with them, providing power and energy for the Church, for 'the word of God is alive and active'.

Study of the sacred text is the soul of theology, and must enrich all Christian preaching and instruction, especially the liturgical homily. All priests, clergy and other ministers of the word should persevere in reading and study of the Bible. All Christians, especially religious, should learn the knowledge of Jesus Christ by frequent reading of the Bible and by taking advantage of available instruction. They should remember that prayer should accompany the reading of scripture, making possible a conversation with God. (*Dei Verbum* # 23-25)

2. The achievement of *Dei Verbum* firstly in overcoming the dichotomy left open by Trent's definition of the sources of revelation. Trent had defined that revelation came *partim* in scripture and *partim* through the

tradition of the Church. *Dei Verbum* now made it clear that the single source of revelation was scripture as understood in the tradition of the Church:

Tradition and scripture form one deposit of the word of God, interpreted by the teaching office of the Church, which serves the word of God by listening to it, guarding it and explaining it faithfully. Tradition, scripture and the teaching authority of the Church cannot stand one without the others (#10).

This overcomes many of the difficulties of which to obey, the scripture or the Church's guidance.

Secondly *Dei Verbum* firmly solves many of the persistent difficulties about inerrancy by its declarations about the purpose of scripture and about literary genres. These difficulties had been a source of worry since Darwin's day. Newman's attempts to solve the problem of 'Nebuchadnezzar king of Nineveh' (Judith 1.1) and inerrancy will be familiar. Questions of historical accuracy and inaccuracy and of authorship were a continual source of tension after the Modernist Crisis. The solution is given by *Dei Verbum*:

Every part of all the books of Old and New Testament is sacred and normative. They teach faithfully and without error everything that God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation. Since the authors of scripture made use of their powers and abilities in consigning to writing what God wanted, they are true authors.

Therefore the interpreter must carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers intended, and especially the literary form used, since truth is expressed differently in history, prophecy, poetry and other forms of speech. Due attention must be paid to contemporary conventions of writing and expression. (#11-12).

These two aspects of *Dei Verbum* place scriptural study and investigation on a quite new footing, giving Catholic exegetes a firm confidence which till then had been at best shaky.

3. A second scriptural liberation operated by Vatican II was the new cycle of readings. Instead of the narrow set of readings, repeated each year, including only the most meagre selection from the Old Testament, and concentrating the gospel passages on a single gospel, Matthew, the full

richness of scripture was laid before the faithful. One could well say that a perfect balance has not yet been reached, and that the Old Testament is often shoe-horned in inappropriately, but at least it is there. Since the Lectionary was introduced in 1969 both Gospels and Letters of Paul have received a *lectio semicontinua* on Sundays, and the liturgies during the week have provided a *lectio* almost *continua*. A good portion of Isaiah is read during Advent and Christmastide, and during Lent and Eastertide a noble diet of John, Acts and the Book of Revelation is offered. Exposure to such a range of scripture cannot but increase our knowledge of the ways of God with human beings and of human beings with God. Since then there has been an explosion of pastoral commentaries on the readings. Perhaps my own *Sunday Word* was among the earlier ones, published in 1979.<sup>17</sup> But I might also mention another in which I participated, *The Fourfold Gospel Commentary*, a commentary on the Sunday readings of the Common Bible Lectionary edited by Andrew Gregory in 2006.<sup>18</sup>

4. The Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* has also played its part in the development of knowledge and love of the scriptures. The advance of the ecumenical movement and the impetus given to it by the declarations of the participation of all Christians in the Church, and to a certain extent those beyond the confines of the Church, has opened the door more freely to acceptance of insights and scholarship from non-Catholics. To be sure, differences of interpretation exist at all levels, but these are seldom along confessional lines. There is increasing awareness that such differences as do exist are more often on lines of the development of tradition and particular emphases within particular Church communities than on the actual interpretation of texts. I think it is true to say that the boot has moved onto the other foot: whereas Catholics used to be highly suspicious of non-Catholic biblical interpretation, now any suspicion that there is remains on the side of Protestant suspicion of Catholic bias. At the same time it is also true to say that in non-Catholic use of the Bible there is also an increasing awareness of the importance of the ecclesial dimension in the guidance of interpretation.

## **Conclusion**

I have endeavoured to outline the progress of Catholic understanding and use of the Bible in England during the last century in the context of the development of Catholic approaches to the Bible throughout the Church. In this progress the CBA has played its part, sometime more effectively,

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<sup>17</sup> H. Wansbrough, *The Sunday Word: A Complete Commentary on the Sunday Lectionary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> A.F. Gregory (ed.), *The Fourfold Gospel Commentary* (London: SPCK, 2006).

sometimes less, in its aim to foster interest by the Catholic laity of Great Britain in the Holy Scriptures. Perhaps I should conclude by mentioning *The Gift of Scripture*, a fine teaching booklet requested by the Bishops' Conference, written by a prominent member of the CBA, Adrian Graffy, and presented by the Cardinal of Westminster at the British Library in 2005.<sup>19</sup> This was a companion-volume to the Bishops' teaching document on the Eucharist, *One Bread, One Body*, originally insisted upon by Bishop Jack Brewer of Lancaster. It is a fine survey of current Catholic teaching on the Bible.

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<sup>19</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *The Gift of Scripture* (London: CTS, 2005).