

**THE RELIGION OF THE
SCRIPTURES; PAPERS FROM THE
CATHOLIC BIBLE CONGRESS
HELD AT CAMBRIDGE, JULY 16-
19, 1921**

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The religion of the Scriptures; papers from the Catholic Bible Congress held at Cambridge, July 16-19, 1921 by C. Lattey

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THE RELIGION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Papers from the Catholic Bible Congress
held at Cambridge, July 16—19, 1921

Edited by

THE REV. C. LATTEY, S. J.
(M.A., OXON.)

Professor of Holy Scripture at St. Beuno's College,
North Wales, Author of *Back to Christ*, etc.,
Joint Editor of the Westminster
Version of the Sacred
Scriptures

Catholic Summer School Lectures

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NIHIL OBSTAT

L. W. GEDDES, S.I.
Censor deputatus

IMPRIMATUR

✠ FREDERICK WILLIAM
ARCHBISHOP OF LIVERPOOL
Administrator of the Diocese of Northampton

June 23, 1921

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L. W. GEDDES, S.I.
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IMPRIMATUR

J. H. CANON ASHMOLE
Vicar Capitular of the Diocese of Northampton

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

At the time when this preface must be written the Catholic Bible Congress at Cambridge is still in the future. Its essential character is that of a religious celebration in honour of the fifteenth centenary of St. Jerome, the great biblical doctor of the Latin rite, as St. John Chrysostom was that of the Greek ; the former especially eminent in work upon the Old Testament, the latter in work upon the New, the former powerful in work as a pioneer of Western asceticism, the latter glorious for all time as the model of the Christian preacher. The present is a time especially opportune for honouring St. Jerome, seeing that his great work, the Latin Version of the Bible known as the Vulgate, is about to renew its youth, brought forth in primitive accuracy through the learned labours of Cardinal Gasquet and the Benedictine commission. The Vulgate, in origin and revision, will be one of the dominating thoughts of the Congress, and in this little book receives a full meed of praise from one competent to bestow it.

But a more profound purpose underlies the Congress. With Pope Leo XIII.'s issue of the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* in 1893 began a new era for Biblical studies in the Church, which from that time have made steady advance, ever deepening and widening their course. In the recent encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* the present Holy Father prays " for all the children of the Church, that penetrated and strengthened by the

sweetness of Holy Writ, they may attain to the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ." To help them in so holy a purpose is a further object of the Congress, and indeed, to contribute something to that "right interpretation, defence and pious meditation of Holy Scripture" for which the Holy Father desires supplication through St. Jerome to be made (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. XII., pp. 422, 440).

The mention of "defence" brings us to another aspect of the matter. The *Providentissimus Deus* is also a landmark in the progress of rationalism; it meant that the Holy See recognised that the absolute authority of the written Word of God was no longer acknowledged by all who called themselves Christians. And this fact has a peculiar significance for our country, where there are many, it may be hoped, who have not lost their love for Holy Writ, and would gladly retain their faith in it. These, too, the Congress is designed in some measure to help, and of necessity the Congress papers also.

The central theme chosen for the lectures, and consequently for this book, has been the practical issue of Biblical religion. A preliminary explanation of the Catholic standpoint has been ably drawn up by two fathers of the Catholic Missionary Society. The religion of the Old Testament, and thereafter the religion of the New, is then set forth, both on the institutional side (the Law, the Church), and in its more personal appeal (the Prophets, Christ). The paper from Dr. Barry is of itself a pertinent reminder that St. Jerome in his scholarly and penitential life purposed to be, and in truth was, an exponent of Biblical religion to Western civilisation. "Ignorance of the Scriptures," he declares in the prologue to his commentary upon Isaiah, in words

that find applauding echo alike in the *Providentissimus Deus* and the *Spiritus Paraclitus*, "is ignorance of Christ." Finally, His Lordship the Bishop of Salford, offers us a good illustration of the way in which even eminent scholars may pass from exact philology to somewhat reckless processes of "higher criticism." Such methods are so great a hindrance to solid and responsible Biblical study that His Lordship's remarks form an apt and welcome conclusion to this little book, a plea that Holy Scripture must be saved even from some would-be friends.

In dealing with such vast subjects, the writers of these papers have found themselves obliged to be content with the mere selection of what seemed most important and relevant. Here, too, it must be enough to indicate the most vital conclusion. In Holy Scripture we have documents pointing to a very high form of religious experience, and setting forth the conditions under which it was realised, at first in an imperfect form under the Old Covenant, and then in the developed universalism of the New. Three elements appear to dominate this experience, namely, *faith* as the root of the whole, *love* as the vital sap, the driving force, leading to entire self-surrender to a personal God, speaking of old through the prophets, and in the end through His Incarnate Son—and finally, *organic life*, without which religion lacks the unity and responsibility demanded alike by human nature and the Infinite Majesty of God. In place of this we find about us a blind groping after the truth, an intolerable disunion, a nervous fear to commit oneself, or even that desire to test results which inevitably

excludes from all that is noblest and best in religious experience.

Faith, intellectual affirmation, is in fact essential to the experience ; any other assumption proves at long last to be fundamentally wrong. Even according to the modern Gospel, the very experience should be its own guarantee, the surpassing quantity and quality of the religious experience engendered by fidelity to the principles outlined above. Nevertheless, one must be quit of ignorant prejudice, and the cant about " formalism " and the like, which sometimes blinds the eyes of the unwary. To see clearly and to understand will at least be an invitation to partake : to partake is to thirst for more : to drink deep is to know none other wine.

C. L.