

BOOK REVIEWS . . . . . 232

SEHWAK, W.: *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation*  
 HERRTRICH, V., AND WEISER, A. (ED.): *Das Alte Testament deutsch*, Vols. 4, 9, and 12  
 CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA: *The Holy Bible 3: Job to Strach*  
 ROWLEY, H. H.: *The Unity of the Bible*  
 JOHNSON, A. R.: *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*  
 GLOVER, W. B., JR.: *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the 19th Century*  
 GREEN-ARMYtage, A. H. N.: *A Portrait of St. Luke*  
 BARRETT, C. K.: *The Gospel according to St. John*  
 RAHNER, K., S.J.: *Schriften zur Theologie*  
 OTT, L.: *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*  
 O'CONNOR, E. D. (ED.): *The Mystery of the Woman*  
 LEMMING, B., S.J.: *Principles of Sacramental Theology*  
 DORONZO, E., O.M.I.: *De extrema unzione 2: De causis extrinsecis*  
 PORRAT, P., S.S.: *Christian Spirituality*  
 BOUTER, L., C.O.: *The Meaning of the Monastic Life*  
 MASURE, E.: *Parish Priest*  
 POGGEE, C. E.: *The French Diocesan Hymns and Their Melodies*  
 McDONNELL, E. W.: *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture*  
*Nuove ricerche storiche sul Giansenismo*  
 BRUNOTTE, H., AND WEBER, O. (ED.): *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon*, Fascicles 1-7  
 PARKER, T. M.: *Christianity and the State in the Light of History*  
 NEMEC, L.: *Church and State in Czechoslovakia*  
 BRACELAND, F. J. (ED.): *Faith, Reason and Modern Psychiatry*  
 FLEW, A., AND MACINTYRE, A. (ED.): *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*  
 BERDYAYEV, N.: *The Meaning of the Creative Act*

DESCRIPTIVE NOTICES . . . . . 282

BOOKS RECEIVED . . . . . 289

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THE JOHANNINE SACRAMENTARY

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EXEGETES, theologians, and plain readers of the NT owe to Professor C. H. Dodd for his crowning work on John's Gospel<sup>1</sup> a debt not likely to be repaid in this generation by anything that will surpass it. We have the feeling, in fact, that Dodd has done much which need never be done again, and that he has established some sureties which will remain and on which it is only necessary to build. Among these I would instance the fixing of the sacramental character of John, at which Dodd has long been at work, together with Oscar Cullmann<sup>2</sup> and others.<sup>3</sup> The preoccupation with the sacraments is by no means confined to John: Cullmann has made a convincing case for the interpretation of Mk 10:13-16 and parallels in the Synoptic Gospels as (in addition to the original historical sense of the passages) a kind of *disciplina arcana* inculcating infant baptism,<sup>4</sup> and there are other evidences that John had been anticipated in his "spiritualizing" of the gospel kerygma. But it is certainly in the fourth Gospel that this tendency has come to full term and the gospel form has become a vademecum for the faithful rather than a proclamation of the good news of salvation.

This fact is to be explained by the Church's developed knowledge of its own destiny. The Pauline Epistles are eloquent testimony that the earliest days of Christianity were lived in expectation of an imminent parousia,<sup>5</sup> and the Gospel of Mark, which has most faithfully preserved the primitive catechesis, in general holds to this perspective by

<sup>1</sup> *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953).  
<sup>2</sup> *Early Christian Worship* (London: S.C.M., 1953) translates the author's *Urchristentum und Gottesdienst* and its supplement in *Les sacrements dans l'Évangile johannique*.  
<sup>3</sup> For example, A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the NT* (London: S.C.M., 1952).  
<sup>4</sup> *Baptism in the NT* (London: S.C.M., 1950), esp. pp. 71 ff.  
<sup>5</sup> As to whether Paul shared this notion, cf. L. M. Dewailly, O.P., and B. Rigaux, O.F.M., *Les épîtres de saint Paul aux Thessaloniciens* (Paris: du Cerf, 1954) p. 24: "Avec l'Église primitive, il a vécu dans l'attente. Il a certifié que le jour du Seigneur n'était point arrivé. Mais il a tenu compte de la vraisemblance d'une parousie prochaine. . . . Il a teinté son message des couleurs de son espérance. . . . Proclamer une espérance n'est point porter un jugement ni enseigner une erreur."

contenting itself with reporting rather than applying and extending the kerygma. With Matthew and Luke the change is already apparent.<sup>6</sup> Here Christ is the new Moses proclaiming a new and enduring Law from a new Sinai. Luke leaves the Temple of Zachary's Jewish sacrifice a place of Christian worship, and in Acts he leads the Church from Jerusalem to Rome, whence it looks into an indefinite future. The development in Christian thinking has been, as David Stanley has called it, "from kingdom to Church." What solidified this development and confirmed it was the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., which separated Church and Synagogue forever in fact as well as in principle, and left the Church in the world with its work beginning, not ended, with no parousia but rather the reign of the Spirit, the other Advocate.<sup>7</sup> When the Gospel of John was written towards the end of the first century in this fuller recognition of the Church's part in the divine economy, we correspondingly find in it a "realized eschatology" instructing the Christian how he must live in the world, with a consequent emphasis on grace, the sacraments, and the indwelling of the Trinity.<sup>8</sup> For John was written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (20:31).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1954); D. M. Stanley, S.J., "Kingdom to Church," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 16 (1955) 1-29.

<sup>7</sup> Among Catholic authors, A. Wilkenhauser, *Ehrliehung in das NT* (Freiburg: Herder, 1953) pp. 144, 161 f., hesitantly with regard to Greek Mt, more positively with regard to Lk, is inclined to date the first and third Gospels between 70-80 A.D.

<sup>8</sup> I trust that it is unnecessary to point out that, in using "realized eschatology" or in speaking of development, nothing more is meant than the normal unfolding of revelation which has occurred through Christian thinking as circumstance and providence decreed. That the Church became anything other than what her Founder intended is, apart from dogmatic considerations, unthinkable because it is opposed by the historical witness of the Scriptures. Modern study continues to show how arbitrary were the historical reconstructions of the last century according to which Pauline, let alone Johannine, Christianity was a betrayal of Christ. A fine capsule statement can be found in W. F. Albright, "The Bible after Twenty Years of Archeology," *Religion in Life* 21 (1952) 547-50, with the conclusion that "the thought content of John's Gospel reflects the Jewish background of John the Baptist and Jesus, not that of later times. Sayings and deeds of Jesus, narratives and sermons are all of one piece and cannot be separated from the person of our Lord. . . . The Gospel of John carries us straight back to the heart of Jesus. . . . There is no reason to date the Gospel after A.D. 90; it may be earlier."

The appreciation of this function of the Gospels, one of the happier fruits of Form Criticism, has claimed the attention of too few Catholic authors. There are, of course, brilliant exceptions,<sup>9</sup> but while Catholic scholars—exegetes, if not theologians—have accepted with enthusiasm and even to some extent have taken the lead in the *Gattungsforschung* of the OT, there has been a reluctance to apply the same criteria to the NT. The already well-known and invaluable *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* may, I presume, be taken as a fair cross-section of what is in the main a conservative Catholic view of the Bible. With a few deplorable lapses, the *Commentary* handles the literary forms of the OT quite adequately. But if we check the paragraphs under the rubric "Form Criticism" and its allies, we will find—or so is my impression—that the aberrations of Bultmann and Dibelius loom larger in the authors' minds than any of the positive contributions of this school of criticism. Yet what is wrong with Bultmann, when all is said and done, is not his Form Criticism but his theology and his philosophy.

For some reason there is a hesitancy about accepting the fact that the Gospels were for the first Christians precisely what they are for us, and that they were written with this purpose in mind. Though we are fond of declaiming that "the Church wrote the NT," there is a reluctance to concede that the needs of the apostolic community, which were basically the same as our needs today, to some extent determined the Gospels' form and content. Surely to recognize that at least one reason for the inclusion of the story of our Lord's temptation immediately after that of His baptism in the catechesis was to teach that "the newly baptized Christian must be ready, like his Lord, to face immediately the onset of the Tempter,"<sup>10</sup> does not minimize the fact that it was included also because it really happened. The same may be said for seeing Mk 2:18-22 and parallels as a story to answer the question: why do we Christians fast? To take a less certain example, could not Matthew's modification of the words of the crowd, "they glorified the God who had given such power to men" (9:8; cf. the

<sup>9</sup> On John has recently appeared an English translation of the excellent but all too brief *Revelation and Redemption*, by William Grossouw (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1955).

<sup>10</sup> A. E. J. Rawlinson, *St. Mark* (6th ed.; London: Methuen, 1947) p. 12.

parallels), be a deliberate accommodation, a reminder of the power of the keys in the Church? That the Apostles are "other Christs" is part of the catechesis, and it is a commonplace of theology that one aspect of the Incarnation is the exemplary value of our Lord's life.

Only by an uncritical sacrifice of tradition and sound judgment can the Gospels become simply the projection of the aspirations and imagination of the early Church. Their authorship and historical trustworthiness are, if anything, more assured today than ever before. Yet we must recognize that for their authors history as such was secondary to something far more important, that they were not written principally to provide texts for the tract *De ecclesia*. They are first and foremost—and here John is only the enlargement of a tradition already found in the Synoptics and in the oral catechesis underlying them—theological treatises. They are theology in the grand Semitic tradition of which the Pentateuch and the Book of Chronicles are earlier examples. They are, in their own manner, *Heilsgeschichte*. This means that they are selective history, history with a purpose, that their omissions may be more important than what they include. To explain away the divergences of the Synoptics by the plea that they are "in substantial accord" is to miss the whole point, since discord was in some cases what the evangelist wanted to achieve. The Synoptic and Johannine "questions" are quite as important to exegesis and theology as they are to criticism.

To make an end of it, what the evangelists mean by the use of the pericopes they have chosen is often of greater importance than the original sense of the narrative or saying recorded. Mk 10:13-16 can serve as a proof, if we need one, that our Lord loved children. It means more when we understand it as a parable in action concerning the spirit of the true disciple. It means still more—and I do not believe that this added meaning is of any less importance—if we can understand it as Cullmann does, as containing a liturgical formula used in baptism: a passage, then, which had been shaped to the needs of the Christian community without the sacrifice of any of its other values. No one who believes in the inspiration of Scripture can afford to make light of this meaning of the Gospels and of the research necessary to get at it. If it is what the evangelist intended to put there, it is his literal sense and therefore the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is, in

David Stanley's words, "the induction into the *sensus plenior* of the kerygma."<sup>11</sup>

The realization that there is in John so much of this quality, which Dodd is pleased to call the "Johannine irony," concealing as it does spiritual teaching under the apparently trivial details of a story, has led to the restoration of a rule of interpretation that has always remained cardinal with Catholics, that of the *analogia fidei*. It is frankly acknowledged that the fulness of John's meaning is to be seen only against the background of the belief and worship of the Church that brought it into being. And it is precisely for this reason that there is a need for Catholic scholars to interest themselves in this study. Men like Dodd and Cullmann, whose insights and erudition are prodigious, nevertheless belong to a religious tradition which has considerably obscured the origins of Christianity. That they have found so much is a tribute to their honesty and scholarly integrity,<sup>12</sup> but the fact remains that men for whom the religion of the early Church can be summed up as "the two sacraments of primitive Christianity" will not find all that John has put into his Gospel.

In the following pages I wish to offer a couple of suggested lines along which I believe a study could be made to reveal the complete sacramentary of the Church for which John was writing. They are suggestions only, and I offer them with all diffidence as ideas rather than as conclusions. This will not be an excursion into eisegesis. We know that the determination of "seven sacraments, neither more nor less" is a development of doctrine centuries later than the NT. When Cullmann concludes from his analysis of Jn 9:1-39, for example, that "in the earliest days of Christianity the act of Baptism was bound up

<sup>11</sup> David M. Stanley, S.J., "*Didache* as a Constitutive Element of the Gospel-form," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 17 (1955) 345. The entire article is recommended to the reader who wishes a clear concept of the Gospels as "teaching" (*didache*) in addition to "preaching" (the kerygma proper).

<sup>12</sup> That the early Christians had a sacramental Church and a rather developed liturgy has been largely a Protestant discovery, as far as the NT evidence is concerned. Here again is the curious paradox that while Protestant authors readily recognize that the great Christological poems of Col 1:15-20, Phil 2:5-11, and Eph 1:3-14 are primitive Christian liturgy (for example, cf. Charles Masson in *Commentaire du NT* [Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé] 10: *Colossiens* [1950] 104 ff.; 9: *Ephésiens* [1953] 148 ff.), we often look in vain in Catholic sources even to find the matter considered, apparently from a misplaced determination to preserve Pauline "originality."

and Mary is identified as the woman of the anointing, who is anonymous in the Synoptic story. (3) In the Synoptics the anointing is of the head of Jesus, while in John it is of His feet. Here, I think, and in the events that follow from this, is the essence of John's symbolism. (4) The Synoptics say that "the disciples" were indignant at this apparent waste of precious ointment, while John specifies that the protest was made by Judas, and because he was a thief. (5) The application of the story is different in the two traditions, as we shall see.

Legault has already submitted this narrative to a Form-Critical analysis<sup>15</sup> and has concluded that the stories in Lk 7 and Jn 12 represent mutually contaminated traditions. This may be quite valid to explain the genesis of the Johannine story; the question hinges on the larger one of the undeniable affinities between Lk and Jn. But the fact remains that John (or the disciple of John, as Legault prefers), who both knew the Synoptic tradition and is faithful to the Palestinian scene which he portrays, has nevertheless kept an anointing of the feet, "something unheard of in the Orient."

First, I think it necessary to point out that John's chronology is more likely to be symbolic than the Synoptics'. Probably both are. If the Synoptics have put the story in relation to the beginning of the passion kerygma, it is doubtless because of their interpretation of it as a symbolic preparation of Jesus for death (less obviously, as Legault would have it, because "it brings out the cupidity of the traitor Judas," since it is only in John that Judas' cupidity is featured, in anticipation of what the Synoptics have in Mt 26:14-16 and parallels). But it does not therefore follow that John is "perfectly correct" in his chronology, if by this is meant the triviality of determining one day of the week rather than another. John has put the story within his "Book of Signs" six days before the Passover, i.e., seven days before the resurrection, for the same reason that he put the first of Jesus' "signs," the miracle at the wedding feast of Cana, seven days after the first witness of the Baptist. John intends to connect the anointing with the resurrection.

This connection is apparent also from the stress on the presence of the resurrected Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, just as the story of the

<sup>15</sup> A. Legault, C.S.C., "An Application of the Form-Critique Method to the Anointings in Galilee and Bethany," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 16 (1954) 131-45. This article may be recommended for a concise explanation of the relevance of Form Criticism to the Gospels.

with the laying on of hands, and in this connexion the double act of the laying on of the clay and the washing in Siloam constitutes an analogy,<sup>16</sup> there is no reason to suppose, in fact, that the Johannine Church did make a conscious separation between the two signs (which are still inseparable in Oriental rites), any more than to suppose that the Johannine Church would have defined these signs as they are defined by Peter Lombard or in the *Summa theologica*. It is quite enough to recognize that for John the laying on of hands which we see throughout Acts was, like the water, a *sêmeion*. What we would see are his other *sêmeia*.

#### THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

In Jn 12:1-11 appears one of the rare parallels with the Synoptic Gospels, the record of the anointing which occurs in the passion story of Mt 26:6-13 and Mk 14:3-9. Luke, who avoids even apparent repetitions, has omitted the story in view of his similar account of an anointing in Galilee in 7:36-50.

That John has the story at all, is significant.<sup>14</sup> As before, when he paralleled the miracle of the loaves to make it a *sêmeion* of the Eucharist, we should expect something of the same order here. Hence, we should attend closely to those points on which he diverges from the Synoptic account, to which he has otherwise adhered even verbally. The points of divergence are these: (1) In the Synoptics the event takes place two days before the Passover. Neither Mt nor Mk makes an issue of the time element, which they bring in simply to announce the coming betrayal of the Lord. John, however, specifies that the anointing took place six days before the Passover. (2) The Synoptics place the scene in the house of Simon the leper. John does not contradict this, but he relates the story to the preceding one of the raising of Lazarus by noting that Lazarus and his sisters were also present. One would get the impression, if he had only John's Gospel, that the anointing took place in Lazarus' house, though this is not stated. Lazarus reclined at table with the Lord, Martha served the supper,

<sup>14</sup> *Early Christian Worship*, p. 104.

<sup>15</sup> It will not do to say that John and the Synoptics follow "a common passion tradition." They are not more noticeably parallel in the passion than elsewhere; they agree on more facts, but the facts are presented in vastly different ways. Secondly, John has not begun his passion story, which is marked by the solemn entry into Jerusalem.

raising of Lazarus had already anticipated the present one by referring to Mary as the one who anointed the Lord's feet (11:2). The raising of Lazarus is a sign of the divine life which comes through faith in Christ (11:25 f.), a manifestation of the glory of God (11:4, 40). So, I believe, is the anointing at Bethany.

Dodd hesitantly takes the anointing as a symbolic burial or designation of Jesus for burial.<sup>16</sup> But while it is this in the Synoptics, it seems that John excludes precisely this idea. "In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it for my burial," writes Mt 26:12. According to Mk 14:8, "She has by anticipation anointed my body for burial." But John has our Lord say (v. 7): "Let her keep it for the day of my burial" (*hina eis ten hēmeran tou entaphiasmou mou tērēsē auto*).<sup>16a</sup> The meaning of this we must try to see in a moment.

The anointing is of Christ's feet. The washing of feet in Jn 13:1-20 is a sign of at least certain aspects of the Eucharist, and Higgins may be right in saying that "the answer of Jesus, 'He who has bathed has no need to wash, except his feet, but is wholly clean', means that baptism washes away sin and cannot be repeated, but that from time to time purification from post-baptismal sins in the Eucharist is necessary."<sup>17</sup> That any such meaning is intended here, I doubt. I rather think that the anointing of the feet, whether it is a tradition contaminated by Lk 7 or deliberately connected with it by the author, has been preserved for the reference to the woman's wiping the feet dry with her hair, which in turn is the explanation for the seemingly irrelevant statement, not found in Lk, that "the house was filled with the odor of the ointment" (v. 3: *hē de oikia eplērōthē ek tēs osmēs tou myrrou*).

In Jn 12:41 the author cites Is 6:1 in summing up the "Book of Signs" and explaining why Christ was rejected. Isaiah saw His glory, but the Jews loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God (v. 43). The glory of God, which is the glory of Christ, He has manifested by His signs. Is 6:1 (cf. Ez 43:5; 44:4) is, if the symbolism I suggest is correct, in parallel with Jn 12:3: *plērēs ho oikos tēs doxēs autou*. There may also be an allusion to Jer 25:10 (LXXX), which lists

<sup>16</sup> *Fourth Gospel*, p. 370.

<sup>16a</sup> The *textus receptus* has *telēstēn*, an obvious harmonization with the Synoptics.

<sup>17</sup> *The Lord's Supper*, p. 84.

among the things to pass away with the Babylonian captivity the *osmēn myrrou*; in Jn 6:45 and elsewhere Jeremiah' prophecy of restoration is seen fulfilled in Christ's presence (Jer 31 [LXX 38]:34). The anointing, then, or indeed the ointment, is a *sēmneion* of the glory of Christ, related to His resurrection, or pointing to it. Like wine, water, and the laying on of hands, it has a relation to the grace and truth which come through Jesus Christ, not through the Law.

"Let her keep it for the day of my burial." While the word *tērēsē* is not exclusively Johannine, it is preeminently so.<sup>18</sup> When placed on the lips of the Lord it always has reference to the Johannine "realized eschatology" (ordinarily with *entolas* or *logon nou* as object). This is an additional reason to see the ointment as meaningful for the Christian life, a means of divine grace. "For the day of my burial" obviously does not refer to our Lord's physical burial; for John—alone of the evangelists—is careful to point out that such could not have been the case (quite apart from the fact that the oil was now in Mary's hair). While the Synoptics seem to presuppose that the Lord's body was simply wrapped in a linen cloth in view of His hasty burial, with the proper use of spices and ointments reserved for later, which was however precluded by the resurrection (cf. Mt 27:57 ff. and parallels), John stresses that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did first prepare the body with a mixture of about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes (*myrrina smyrnēs kai aloēs hōs livas hekaton*), and consequently that everything was done properly "as is the custom in Jewish burials" (19:40). The ointment that Mary was to keep was not for Jesus' "Jewish" burial, but that burial which is described in the following 12:23 ff., the burial of the seed which is the font of life, the *kyphōtēs* (v. 32 f.) which is both death and resurrection: the burial (*taphē*) of the Servant of the Lord (Is 53:9) which is His exaltation and glorification (52:13, *kyphōthēsetai kai dorasthēsetai*). The day of Christ's burial is the day of the Church.

We already know, of course, that anointing with oil was a practice of the primitive Church. Mk 6:13 describes the Apostles anointing, evidently as an adjunct to miraculous healing,<sup>19</sup> and Jas 5:14 f. wit-

<sup>18</sup> Cf. R. Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesevangelie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1953) p. 87. John (if 1 Jn and Ap are included) uses the word more often than all the other NT writers together.

<sup>19</sup> V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1953) p. 306.

