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The Human Dimension of the Bible: The Dynamism of Biblical Tradition

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in an age of rapid secularization—becomes a meaningful and enriching way of life.

Among the many insights provided by the rest of the essays in the second part of the collection, which include studies on the independent historical source material of the Fourth Gospel, its similarities to and differences from the Synoptic Gospels, a deeper understanding of the Our Father as an eschatological prayer, a more balanced evaluation of parables and allegories, and a new insight into the old and familiar beatitudes in Luke—the distinction is made between the historical sense of a text in the context of its original historical tradition and its literal sense in the written Gospel as exemplified by the Johanne account of John the Baptist's witness to Jesus in the first chapter. The context in Mt. 11:3 ("Are you he who is to come or do we look for someone else?") indicates that John the Baptist did not really know Jesus and yet, Jn. 1:26,33 ("I baptize in water... he... baptizes in a Holy Spirit."), Jn. 1:29 ("Behold the lamb of God who takes away the world's sin.") and Jn. 1:30 ("After me is coming one who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.") seem to suggest the contrary. Whereas in their literal and inspired sense, i.e., with the aid of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, Jn. 1:33 refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jn. 1:29 refers to the value of Jesus' death as a propitiation for sin, and Jn. 1:30 refers to the pre-existence of the Word, in their historical sense, i.e., what they meant to John the Baptist when they were first uttered, in the light of John the Baptist's expectation of apocalyptic judgment, Jn. 1:33 is parallel to the significance of the passage "he will gather the wheat into his barn", Jn. 1:29 refers to the sacrificial lamb to be raised up by God to destroy evil in the world, and Jn. 1:30 points to the Prophet Elijah or an Elijahlike figure. The interpretations of the historical sense of the above passages are not definitive but, to substantiate his interpretations, Fr. Brown offers convincing arguments based on an analysis of related biblical passages in the light of new historical and archeological evidence. It is in the appreciation of these arguments which opens a new approach to the Bible, "the only approach that can make sense to the men of our time" that we can make the study of the Bible a fruitful and never-ending challenge to the search for a deeper understanding of God's revelation to man.

JOSE CHANCO

THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF THE BIBLE

THE DYNAMISM OF BIBLICAL TRADITION. Concilium: Theology in the Age of Renewal. Volume 20. New York: Paulist Press, 1967. 213 pp. .

This volume on scriptures opens with a preface by the three eminent editorial directors: Pierre Benoit, O.P., Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., and Bastian van Iersel, S.M.M., highlighting the direction of the manner in which belief in God's personal interventions in history came to be formulated orally and finally edited in written forms. A deeper understanding and appreciation of this human dimension makes the bible not only a testimony of God's revelation to Israel but also a veritable and dramatic witness to all the struggles of a people chosen by God to receive and share freely His invitation to a life of love without measure and without end.

This volume consists of three parts: (1) eight specific articles underlining the dynamism of biblical tradition, (2) a bibliographical survey on the homiletic literature of six countries and (3) a 'Do-C documentation concilium' or an authoritative writing on the dangers that could arise after the Council. A subject index to volumes eleven to twenty is appended at the end.

Among the specific articles, Pierre Grelot of Institut Catholique, writing on 'Tradition as the Source and Environment of Scripture' depicts the process in which the living faithfulness of a community plays within the whole social structure of the People of God. He concludes by emphasizing that the texts in which the living tradition crystallized at a certain level be left open for further development of tradition in order to recover the fullness of the divine Word by which the Church continues to live. The other articles study the same theme in detail. Joseph Schreiner, for example, examines one of the oldest formulae in Israel's confession of faith: 'Yahweh brought us out of Egypt' and how this God who revealed himself in history is later referred to as the same God who also reveals himself in nature thus leaving the ancient creed open to development.

The second part deals with the homily which is a liturgical proclamation actualizing the living tradition on the level prepared for by evangelization and catechesis. Basically a homily is the saying (liturgically) of something (a part of salvation) to someone (the assembly). Genard Hoogbergen of Netherlands speaks for the other five representatives when he insists on a homiletic literature based on sound exegesis which of course requires hours of labor in discovering the message and moments of joy greater than the human heart can guess. Otherwise, as Abbe Michonneau succinctly puts it, 'the length of a homily in certain parishes becomes a calamity'.

The third part is a documentation on the problem of misunderstanding the nature of the Gospels, that often results in undermining its historical reliability and message. A clarification on this problem is crucial at this stage when the scriptures is once more under the scrutiny of more critical researchers.