

BIBLICAL NEWS FROM FRANCE

Every reader of *Scripture* must be acquainted with the magnificent efforts being made in France to promote a sound knowledge of the Bible. The Editions du Cerf for instance have not only given us the *Bible de Jérusalem* but many other works on scriptural questions, all characterised by a sound use of the findings of scientific biblical scholarship. Many of these however, may prove too detailed or too difficult for those whose opportunities for biblical studies are limited. Perhaps many of the readers of *Scripture* would place themselves in this category, and it is for their benefit particularly that I would like to call attention to a series of booklets which is being published by the *Ligue Catholique de l'Évangile*. They are truly remarkable, for whilst they are intended simply for the average intelligent Catholic reader, they do not hesitate to introduce him to that modern attitude towards the Bible which even now, in spite of the support given in *Divino afflante* is considered by some to be dangerous, at least for the layman. At least for the layman . . . everyone will understand the reasons why such a proviso must sometimes be included, and I trust that all will appreciate the good intentions, but surely the layman has also his difficulties, many of which arise precisely because his religious instruction has not progressed sufficiently. The Catholic layman, well versed in his particular profession, and counting among his friends many intelligent people who are interested in religious problems, may often feel that his Faith seems singularly naïve and unattractive to others. Unmoved as he may be by criticisms and objections, he cannot but regret that he is incapable of helping others to a proper understanding of Catholic belief. One of the main sources of these difficulties lies in the erroneous views that many, including Catholics, have of the Church's teaching in the face of modern discoveries. Not many years ago it was popular to maintain that in the light of such developments the authority of the Bible had been destroyed. This is no longer so widespread because many now understand that this new light thrown upon the Bible has not destroyed but illumined it. Yet it is still widely thought that the Catholic Church, alone among those who treasure the Bible, has refused to allow this light to shine. One learned reviewer of *A Catholic Commentary* mentioned with approval, and, one suspects, with surprise, that the contributors gave due consideration to modern non-Catholic scholars throughout. No more than an intelligent reading of these booklets is required in order that we may correct widespread misconceptions of the Church's attitude towards the Bible. Here, in

readily accessible form, is the answer to those who still consider that we deny the human imperfections of the Bible ; that we maintain the Bible to be not only an infallible handbook of religion but also a perfect manual of history and an accurate textbook of the physical sciences. In the first booklet, *Comment lire la Bible*, it is clearly explained that such objections can only come from those who read the Bible as the kind of book it was never intended to be. A later booklet, *Bible et histoire*, gives us the background so necessary if we are to understand precisely what kind of a book it really is, and in *Les Traditions bibliques* we have a straightforward account of the particular way in which the Old Testament was compiled. But of far greater value is the concentration on the religious message of the Bible. We are sometimes in danger of forgetting that the study of the Bible is not primarily a work of defence ; we may easily become too engrossed in replying to objections or in solving difficulties, and lose the religious teaching which God offers us through His inspired Word. In such booklets as *Bible et Evangile*, *Les Prophètes de la Bible et le Christ*, *le Dieu des pauvres*, the religious message, the Good News of the Gospel is expounded as found throughout both the Old and the New Testament. *Evangile et Evangiles* tells us simply and clearly how the Gospels came to be written, yet behind the simplicity lies years of laborious study on the complexities of the synoptic problem. That indeed is the characteristic of all these twelve booklets, averaging about seventy pages, and offered at the rate of four a year to subscribers of 420 fr. How unfortunate it is that few in England will be able to profit by them unless they are translated.

T. WORDEN