

discussion which was not concerned 'to criticize or change the law, but to carry it out'.

(b) Fr Farrell's reflection that 'the responsibility is indeed grave of a priest who omitting conditional baptism, risks receiving a convert into the Church without being assured that his non-Catholic baptism was valid', shows that he still does not perceive this. His implication is that Fr Hastings and the Editor were advocating the undertaking of this grave responsibility. In fact we did just the opposite. Fr Farrell's sentiment though unexceptionable is misleadingly irrelevant.

(c) The fact that Fr Hastings is studying in one of the English Colleges in Rome and does not belong to an English diocese is hardly proof that he has no authority for his statements.

(d) The sense in which the Editor used 'public opinion' was that of Dr Asmussen, in his original article; viz. 'public opinion within the Catholic communion', i.e. residing in the minds of the faithful. Fr Farrell takes this phrase, gives it a quite different meaning, which he dubs Protestant, and more ambiguously semi-political, and foists it on Dr Asmussen, who did not mean that by it, and on Fr Hastings, who never used it at all.

(e) The Editor's attention is drawn to what Fr Farrell believes to be an equivocation. He is mistaken. He forgets that in the historical process that culminated in the definition of the Assumption that dogma began by being an opinion in the minds of the faithful. The same is true of the Immaculate Conception. 'The Eucharistic fast was changed on the personal initiative of the Pope for purely factual reasons', but does it follow from this that the expressed wishes and needs of the faithful in respect of those facts carried no weight in the making of the change?

No further comment on this subject will be published.—EDITOR.



EXTRACTS

SCRIPTURE, the Quarterly of the Catholic Biblical Association, should be regularly read at least by priests, nuns and all in any way engaged in teaching the Faith. It expounds the Scriptures to the non-specialist in a way that sets the Bible in its right place as the groundwork of doctrinal teaching.

The present number, July 1957, is a sample of the good things this review invariably contains, all *ad rem* in regard to the general theme of the July and August numbers of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

In this connection we draw attention to an interesting Question and Answer on the problem of why Galileo was condemned, when the Church admits that the Bible does not set out to teach science. The Editor uses the incident, in his answer, to illustrate how the unchanging truths of Faith are at all times set in the context of changing and increasing new scientific knowledge. What is revealed, itself changeless in essence, has to be seen and understood against this ever changing background:

'Biblical and consequently theological language had been linked with the ancient astronomy for a thousand years, and there had been no reason to distinguish between theological truths and the traditional terms in which those truths were conveyed. The appearance of the Copernican system provided the reason for, and indeed demanded, such a distinction; but it would be most unreasonable to expect that this should be realized immediately. . . . The treasures of God's revealed truths are only gradually appreciated in all their richness and the Church increases her appreciation by laborious efforts, which are stimulated and greatly assisted by the difficulties she is called upon to face. The Galileo incident may well serve to mark the beginning of a long period which proved so fruitful in the growth of this appreciation, precisely because it marked the beginning of a period when the rapid development of the sciences presented so many difficulties of this kind. And perhaps the truth of faith which profited more than any other as a result of this period is the inspiration of the Scriptures.'

The review by the Editor of an important book is also interesting in the same connection; it is *The Two-Edged Sword*, an Interpretation of the Old Testament by John L. McKenzie, s.j. (The Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 1956.) Fr McKenzie shows how the O.T. is the foundation and starting point of the New. The Sacred History in it records God's dealings with his chosen people, and these foreshadow God's dealings with the human race in Redemption. It is important for a true understanding of this to know of what kind this Sacred History is:

'What we call the "historical books" of the Old Testament contain the traditions of the ancient Hebrews about themselves; some traditions are nearer to the events, some are more remote, but they are all "stories"' (p. 4). 'The storyteller is not satisfied with a bare recital of names; his characters must live, and their actions must take on movement and realism. Therefore he tells us what they felt, what they said, what they did, what they wore, and such things, even though he has no memory of these details. Were he an historian, he ought not to do this; but he would stand astonished

if we were to tell him so. I, he would tell us, am a storyteller, not an historian; I do not know what you mean by an historian. If people want lists of names and dates, let them look at the royal archives; I tell them the story. . . . These are the stories which pass by word of mouth from generation to generation; not history, nor yet fiction, even if they are memories fleshed out by creative imagination' (pp. 61-62). 'We hesitate to attribute storytelling to God, because we fear we shall charge him with "historical error". Such a charge ignores the very nature of the story as we all know it. "Historical fact" and "historical error" are modern concepts, formulated by modern historical science and defined in terms of that science and its methods, these concepts would have been unintelligible to the storyteller' (pp. 63-64).

The reviewer then comments:

In this book will be found the perfect prescription for the cure of that modern disease which we may call 'historicism', a disease which renders so many incapable of reading the Scriptures (or, for that matter, the legends of the Saints) to their profit. In the same clear and convincing manner, the author discusses the question of cosmic and human origins, and lays to rest the spectres conjured up by modern scientific research into the origins of the world and of man, which have been so long dreaded as threats to the opening chapters of Genesis.

These principles are concretely illustrated in an article on *The Sacrifice of Isaac* also by Fr McKenzie. This piece of 'history' gives rise to a moral difficulty in the eyes of the modern reader, teacher and hearer. How could God have commanded human sacrifice? The findings of modern scientific criticism are enlisted to show the origins of the story (Genesis 22). Its different local and temporal strata, and its differing purposes—topographical, liturgical and hagiographical—are analysed, and its literary character shown to share that of all the pentateuchal traditions; it has lived and grown with Israel and been adapted for different purposes at different times. Its final purpose, as it appears in Genesis, is to set forth God's condemnation of child sacrifice and to base on divine revelation the Hebrew custom of redeeming the first-born by substitution. Further, it is used to represent the great climatic crisis in the life of Abraham which precedes the realization of the promise and elicits supreme faith and pure hope.