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## TOWARDS A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MARY

The invitation to speak to you on the occasion of the twenty-fifth annual convention of the Society gives me the opportunity to present to you the results of some recent work on the nature of the Bible's truth, as well as on some aspects of biblical theology. These results contain, I suggest, valuable insights useful to those preoccupied with searching the Scriptures for the biblical truth about Mary. If I seem to be unduly concerned with the preposition "towards," may I excuse myself by saying that I do not presume to make applications of scholarly results to Mariology before members of this Society. You are much better qualified than I to make such applications. My hope is that in presenting the following review of recent studies on the truth of the Bible debate and certain hermeneutical principles to be applied in finding the truth of the Bible, I contribute something useful, however small, towards your construction of an adequate and satisfying biblical theology of our Blessed Lady.

Within the last decade, well-known scholars such as Oswald Loretz, Pierre Benoit, Norbert Lohfink, Louis Alonso-Schökel, and Heinrich Schlier have focused attention on the question: "What do we mean when we say the Bible is true"? Are we necessarily thinking in terms of the familiar "*adaequatio rei et intellectus*" of our seminary philosophy course? Or should we be thinking in terms of the conception of biblical truth proposed by Oswald Loretz, who insists that the above-mentioned concept is a Greek, not a Semitic one, and has no place in the Bible, at least no primary place. As we shall see, Loretz proposes that the concept of God's faithfulness to His promises is the principal idea signified by the Hebrew term for truth, '*emet*'.

In the course of the truth of the Bible debate, other problems have been laid bare, especially those concerned with the her-

meneutical procedures to be followed in arriving at the Bible's final meaning. We begin with the details of the truth of the Bible debate.

### THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE DEBATE<sup>1</sup>

#### A. Oswald Loretz

We begin with the work of Oswald Loretz.<sup>2</sup> Loretz states clearly his intention: "... what I am speaking of is the *truth* of the Bible, not its inerrancy or freedom from error."<sup>3</sup> What does Loretz mean by the expression "Truth of the Bible"? He insists that the answer to the question, "In what sense does the Bible claim to be true?", must come from the Bible itself. Loretz proceeds to (1) investigate the biblical modes of conception and understanding of truth, (2) examine the biblical terms used to express the concept of "truth," especially the term '*emet*,' and (3) compare the results of his investigations with what is known of the Ancient Near East and Semitic concept of truth.<sup>4</sup> He concludes that the Old Testament speaks primarily "of God being 'true' to his words, and not of the truth of the words themselves."<sup>5</sup> The term '*emet*' means primarily not 'truth' but "firmness, stability, reliability, certainty, sureness, integrity, faithfulness."<sup>6</sup> Loretz grants, as he must, that the Old Testament does also state that God's words are true but he insists that "for the Old Testament the 'truth' of

<sup>1</sup> I have already treated this matter in a paper entitled *The Truth of the Bible Debate*, delivered at the Trinity College Biblical Institute, June, 1971. In her yet-to-be-completed doctoral thesis concerning the concept of *berem*, Helen C. O'Neill, O.P., has a thorough presentation of the debate as it now stands.

<sup>2</sup> O. Loretz, *Die Wahrheit der Bibel* (Freiburg, 1964); revised version of the original edition, translated by D. J. Bourke, under the title *The Truth of the Bible* (New York, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Loretz, *op. cit.*, viii.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, 8-84.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, 82.

God is primarily bound up with his faithfulness."<sup>7</sup> Loretz argues that the Old Testament reveals Yahweh as a covenant God who not only demands faithfulness from His chosen people, but also promises faithfulness of His own part.<sup>8</sup> From his study of *aletheia*, the Greek term used most often in the Bible to translate 'emet, Loretz concludes that *aletheia*, like 'emet, can signify many different things depending upon the context: "truthfulness," "reliability," "uprightness," and the like.<sup>9</sup> Loretz's position on the question of the Bible's truth can be summarized as follows: (1) The truth of the Bible consists not in the adequation between the mental word and the extra-mental reality, but rather in God's faithfulness to His promises made to Israel. The Bible would be untrue, according to Loretz, not because it presented something erroneous but because it made God to be a liar. (2) For the most part, Loretz based his thesis on the results of linguistic investigations of the Hebrew word 'emet, which signifies not only the hellenistic concept of truth as the adequation between mental word and extra-mental reality, but more principally the concepts of "faithfulness," "firmness," "reliability" and the like. (3) Finally, Loretz claimed that this is the way the Bible speaks of itself with respect to its truth. Biblically speaking, says Loretz, to teach without error means to teach without lies: "Since the truth of God is manifested in his faithfulness to his covenant people, Scripture

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.* 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, 85. For the derivation of the Johannine concept of truth, cf. I. De la Potterie, *L'arrière-fond du thème johannique de vérité*, in *Studia Evangelica*, Papers Presented to the International Congress on The Four Gospels held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1957, ed. by K. Aland, F. J. Cross, J. Daniélou, H. Riesenfeld and W. C. Van Unnik, found in *Texte und Untersuchungen* 73 (1955) 277-294. For the notion of Jesus as the truth in Eph. 4:21, cf. De la Potterie, *Jésus et la vérité d'après Eph. 4:21*, in *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus*, 2 (Rome, 1961), 45-57.

could only be charged with error if God broke his faith with Israel."<sup>10</sup>

Sharp and severe criticism of Loretz's proposal was not long in coming. On linguistic grounds came challenges from James Barr,<sup>11</sup> Louis Alonso-Schökel,<sup>12</sup> P. Benoit,<sup>13</sup> B. Brinkmann,<sup>14</sup> and E. Gutwenger.<sup>15</sup> Barr, for example, insists that *'emet* should be translated as "truth" and not primarily as "firmness," "steadfastness," or "reliability":

But for *'emet* also it is excessively etymologizing to offer 'firmness' as the 'basic meaning.' 'Truth' is already the right translation as early as the only occurrence in Ugaritic literature.<sup>18</sup>

J. R. Driver<sup>17</sup> translates this Ugaritic evidence as follows:

"Lo! truly, truly, I have wasted (my) life,  
"truly I eat mud (grasping it)

E. Gutwenger<sup>18</sup> questions Loretz's linguistic methodology in placing too great an emphasis on the frequency of the meaning of *'emet* rather than on the meaning of the word derived from a given context. B. Brinkmann<sup>19</sup> and L. Alonso-Schökel<sup>20</sup> agree that *'emet* signifies not only God's faithfulness and fidelity, but also objective truth. Alonso-Schökel<sup>21</sup> argues that there are

<sup>10</sup> Loretz, *op. cit.*, 89.

<sup>11</sup> J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford University Press, 1961).

<sup>12</sup> L. Alonso-Schökel, in *Biblica* 46 (1965) 378-380.

<sup>13</sup> P. Benoit, in *Revue Biblique* 75 (1968), 132-133.

<sup>14</sup> B. Brinkmann, in *Theologie und Philosophie* 41 (1966), 115-118.

<sup>15</sup> E. Gutwenger, *The Inerrancy of the Bible*, in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 87 (1965) 196-202.

<sup>16</sup> Barr, *op. cit.*, 187.

<sup>17</sup> G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburg, 1956), 103, (Baal I\* i. 18f.).

<sup>18</sup> Gutwenger, *art. cit.*, 198.

<sup>19</sup> Brinkmann, *art. cit.*, 117.

<sup>20</sup> Alonso-Schökel, *art. cit.*, 379.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

clear examples in the Bible (e.g., *Dt.* 13:15) where *'emet* can only mean objective truth. In *Dt.* 13:14-16, involving a legal case, clear instructions are given concerning the certainty of the evidence to be used against the accused: "You must inquire carefully into the matter and investigate it thoroughly. If you find that it is true (*'emet*) and an established fact . . ." Alonso-Schökel<sup>22</sup> further criticizes Loretz for failing to make proper distinctions when speaking of the relationship of fidelity to covenant and promise.

Loretz's position that all truth of the Bible must fall under the "fidelity" concept has also occasioned strong objections. Alonso-Schökel<sup>23</sup> asks about those truths which do not pertain directly to the fidelity of God. He cites<sup>24</sup> the preachings in Deuteronomy, or the texts which proclaim the oneness of God, His primordial cosmic action, His universal knowledge.

P. Benoit<sup>25</sup> also questions whether Loretz has given sufficient attention to the element of intellectual knowledge or understanding which is involved in revelation. He, too, recalls that "fidelity" is not the only sense of the word *'emet*. In the Bible we find manifestations of truth in the ordinary sense of the word. Benoit means those religious truths to which we adhere by faith but which do not pertain solely or totally to the idea of trusting in God's fidelity.

J. Jensen asks: "Granted that Scripture does not normally formulate doctrine as we do, does it not teach truths—truths not immediately identifiable with God's fidelity nor immediately derivable from it—that we must formulate (e.g., the personal

<sup>22</sup> *Art. cit.*, 380.

<sup>23</sup> *Art. cit.*, 379.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* The author has in mind such texts as the discourses put into the mouth of Moses (*Dt.* 1:5-4:40); the explicit monotheism of Isaiah (*Is.* 43:13): . . . and I, I am your God, I am he from eternity." (Cf. also *Is.* 41:4; 42:8-13; 44:6-8); or a text which refers to God's creative action and wisdom, such as in the speeches of Yahweh in *Jb.* 38:4-5: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? . . . Who decided the dimensions of it?"

<sup>25</sup> Benoit, *art. cit.*, 132.

nature of the Holy Spirit) and hold as taught inerrantly (even in the Western sense) in Scripture? In fact, the Church does so formulate her doctrines and proclaims them to have been revealed."<sup>26</sup>

B. Brinkmann<sup>27</sup> offers strong objections to the very basis of Loretz's concept of biblical truth, namely, that of the faithfulness of God to His covenant with Israel. What Brinkmann urges against Loretz's argumentation really amounts to this: before we can speak of biblical truth as being God's faithfulness to His promises, we must first establish that the Bible, which is claimed to have represented this testimony of God's faithfulness, is itself without error when it presents it.

Alonso-Schökel raises a pivotal question concerning the "fidelity" concept: "Is it true because it treats of fidelity simply?—the content would be the basis for the truth, or is it true because it gives testimony of a fidelity that in fact is realized?—the truth consists in a relationship. Clearly it treats of the second alternative, because the author tells us that the Bible would not be true if God were unfaithful to His people."<sup>28</sup> Alonso-Schökel sees in this response a truth which cannot be reduced simply to the idea of "fidelity." The question he raises is pertinent: Is the Bible true because its content treats of fidelity or is the Bible true because it testifies to a fidelity that in fact is realized?

E. Gutwenger raises an objection similar to that of Alonso-Schökel. He maintains that "We can only speak of the fidelity of God if his words correspond to facts. Even fidelity in this case is concerned with agreement of word and actuality."<sup>29</sup> The interpretation itself of Scripture by Loretz has drawn criticism from Benoit,<sup>30</sup> who claims that Loretz has failed to take into

<sup>26</sup> J. Jensen, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965) 276-277.

<sup>27</sup> Brinkmann, *art. cit.*, 117-118.

<sup>28</sup> Alonso-Schökel, *art. cit.*, 379.

<sup>29</sup> Gutwenger, *art. cit.*, 198.

<sup>30</sup> Benoit, *art. cit.*, 133.

account the uniqueness of the New Testament in the evolution of words; from Jensen,<sup>31</sup> who thinks that the summary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament is inadequate; and from Alonso-Schökel,<sup>32</sup> who takes Loretz to task for the way he uses the Fourth Gospel.

How are we to evaluate Loretz's concept of biblical truth as God's faithfulness in the face of such criticisms against some of his linguistic, theological, and hermeneutical positions? First, in spite of the hermeneutical problem aggravated by the fact that the dialogue is between opposing Western and Semitic cultures, in spite of the heavy criticism launched against the basic thesis of Loretz, and in spite of the shortcomings of Loretz's argumentation, I should like to insist that Loretz has made an important contribution to the truth of the Bible debate in calling attention to the primary sense of *'emet* in the Bible as "faithfulness." It is true to say that the biblical sense of *'emet* is mostly, though not always, that of "faithfulness." To my knowledge, no one has seriously challenged that fact. To call attention to this sense of *'emet* as primary in the Bible is important, however faulty one may judge the hermeneutic, the argumentation, and the projection of Loretz to be.

Secondly, I suggest that the two great weaknesses in the thesis of Loretz are (1) his failure to convince his critics that all truths in the Bible must be seen in the light of the one great truth, the faithfulness of God to His promises, and (2) his seemingly over-preoccupation with the difference between the biblical and the Greek term for truth. Regarding the first of these weaknesses, Loretz admits that the Bible does, indeed, contain truths which cannot simply be reduced to the concept of "faithfulness," but he insists: "While we cannot, and indeed do not dispute this, we must at the same time observe that sacred Scripture sees these truths in their connection with a single great truth, namely, the faithfulness of God to his

<sup>31</sup> Jensen, *art. cit.*, 277.

<sup>32</sup> Alonso-Schökel, *art. cit.*, 380.



people."<sup>33</sup> The response gives no argumentation to support the position and appears to be quite gratuitous. With regard to the preoccupation with the difference between the Semitic and Greek concept of truth, I find myself in complete sympathy with E. Gutwenger who writes: "There is no point here in making much of the difference between the biblical and Greek term truth, for the person, be he Semite or Greek, would like to know whether a report telling of facts corresponds to actuality or not. This is a prevalent human response. To make an exception for Semites sounds as if they have been excluded from the species 'homo sapiens'."<sup>34</sup>

Loretz responded to Gutwenger by saying that "This may apply to an *a priori* approach, but not to modern research into the real position based on historical and philological grounds."<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, Loretz says nothing further on this rather important point so pertinent to his thesis. He gave no really satisfactory response to Gutwenger's objection.

### B. *The Proposal of Norbert Lohfink*

Whereas Loretz looked for the truth of the Bible in the concept of God's faithfulness, Norbert Lohfink<sup>36</sup> insists that the truth of the Bible must be derived from the study of the Bible as a whole. He first examines the older formulae which enshrine the belief in the inspiration of Holy Scripture. He then compares these with the more recent formulae. Aware of the newly acquired knowledge concerning the multiple authorship of even a single biblical book, and aware also of the problems arising from this multiplicity in the area of inspiration, Lohfink attempts to give some direction to the as yet unsolved problem of the relationship between the results of critical

<sup>33</sup> Loretz, *op. cit.*, 90-91.

<sup>34</sup> Gutwenger, *art. cit.*, 198.

<sup>35</sup> Loretz, *op. cit.*, 82, n. 23.

<sup>36</sup> N. Lohfink, *The Inerrancy of Scripture*, in *The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament*, trans. by R. A. Wilson (Milwaukee, 1968), 24-51.

scholarship and the determination of the meaning of the Bible as a whole. The problem, as Lohfink sees it, may be fairly posed as follows: what does a careful study of the historical meaning of successive layers of biblical texts really contribute to our determining the final meaning of a given biblical truth, a final meaning which has been derived from the study of the Bible as a whole?

In his examination of the older formulae which enshrine the belief in the inspiration of Holy Scripture, Lohfink states clearly his purpose: "The purpose of the following considerations is very modest. They are not intended to lead to radically new formulae, but for the most part only to exclude those among the traditional formulae which today inevitably lead to misunderstanding, and to commend the one which is still true today."<sup>37</sup> He recalls<sup>38</sup> that in the standard treatises on inspiration, inerrancy was predicated of (1) the Bible as a whole, (2) the individual books of the Bible, (3) the inspired writers of the sacred books. In the nineteenth century, the preferred expression in both ecclesiastical documents and in theological treatises was "the inerrancy of the sacred writers," an expression which won out over the expression "the inerrancy of the biblical books" and "the inerrancy of the Bible." Lohfink recalls that theologians and exegetes of the past century thought of biblical authorship as the work of a small, easily identifiable group of inspired individuals such as Moses, who wrote the Pentateuch, David, wrote the Psalms, and Isaiah, the prophet who wrote the entire work which bears his name. In like manner, the New Testament was attributed to eight sacred authors. This idea of biblical authorship, Lohfink claims, is part of the background of the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* (1893) but later ecclesiastical documents modified substantially the above-mentioned ideas of biblical authorship:

<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.*, 26-39.

It is commonly acknowledged that the "Letter to Cardinal Suhard" (1948) and various official pronouncements of the Biblical Commission on the occasion of the second edition to *Enchiridion Biblicum* (1954) enabled Catholic exegetes to depart, even in public pronouncements, from the theses on questions of biblical authorship which the Biblical Commission had propounded at the beginning of the century.<sup>39</sup>

According to the "one author, one book" theory, a book was considered to be a finished product when it came from the hand of its inspired author. The task of an exegete was to attempt to understand the work and, consequently, to determine what the single author had intended to say. The nineteenth century Catholic formulation was made and stated within the limits of the understanding of inerrancy which was current among most Catholic scholars of the period. Contemporary scientific biblical scholarship has benefitted enormously from the studies of archaeologists and philologists working in the field of Ancient Near Eastern literary remains hitherto unknown. It is now abundantly clear to present day biblical scholars that the received text of most of our biblical books was not the work of a single author. Critical studies of the Pentateuch, of the prophetic books, and of the Gospels indicate beyond a reasonable doubt, that these works are the end product of a long and complicated process of composition, alterations, and editorial comments, in most cases by persons unknown. All this raises the question: "What do we understand by the phrase 'author of a biblical book'?" Lohfink realizes that in view of this new understanding of the concept of author certain modifications have to be made with respect to the understanding of the formula "the inerrancy of the sacred writer." Not one, but many authors are now known to have participated in the composition of even a single book. Lohfink carefully delineates the relationship of multiple authors to the finished biblical work as follows:

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, 27.

It was accepted that God might have inspired several human collaborators, working either in parallel or succeeding each other. No single person was responsible for the whole book, and perhaps in carrying out their task most of them had not even any idea of what would emerge centuries later as the final product of the process of composition. Therefore the intention of what is said by individual sacred writers and what is in fact said by the books of the Bible were in many cases not the same. But these sacred writers were all supposed to be inerrant. The consequence was that in the light of the new knowledge, the old formula of the "inerrancy of the sacred writers" no longer meant the same as that of the "inerrancy of the books of the Bible," but far more.<sup>40</sup>

We can appreciate how differently the phrase "inerrancy of the sacred writer" must now be understood in the light of the new concept of biblical authorship if we become aware that the concept of multiple authors means that every phase in the growth of the composition of a given biblical book shares in the inerrancy of the sacred writer. Each addition, each gloss and editorial comment, each adaptation results in a new and inerrant totality taught by the inspired book. The end result of this process of composition has been compared to an archaeological dig: each layer of inerrant material is in danger of being piled upon its predecessor. If many hands during many stages of composition fashioned the Bible as we now have it, and if the various stages of composition actually enjoy inerrancy, then it follows that whatever content these stages exhibit now becomes part of the matter of revelation, and consequently of our faith. The dogmatic theologian would then be required to include as an intrinsic element in his study the results of the critical study of these early stages.

In the light of this new conception of authorship, how should the inerrancy formula be rephrased? Two solutions have been proposed. The first suggests the adoption of the formula, "inerrant final author." This is rejected because the formula does

<sup>40</sup> *Op. cit.*, 29.

not seem to do justice to all those prior authors who seem to have contributed substantially to the composition of a work but did not have a hand in its final editing.<sup>41</sup> Lohfink prefers the second solution which urges the adoption of the formula "inerrancy of the books of the Bible" in terms of proportionate inspiration:

Thus the inerrancy consequent upon the inspiration could not be predicated directly of all the individuals who worked on the book which finally resulted. The inspiration of the many individuals whose work formed a book could then be regarded as a unity, which manifested its effect of inerrancy only once, in the final result of the collaboration.<sup>42</sup>

Lohfink thinks that proportionate inspiration preserves the divine influence on the sacred writers and upholds the inerrancy of the book as finally composed. In the previous solution only the last man who worked on a biblical book in the course of its gradual evolution would have enjoyed the charism of inspiration. In the second solution all writers who have been involved in the composition of the sacred book share in the unity of the book's inspiration. Moreover, if God is the principal author of Sacred Scripture, as faith teaches, it would seem more appropriate that God should have guided "the process of composition as a whole, and above all its main phases."<sup>43</sup> The question now arises: how are the "inerrant books" related to the truth of the whole Bible?

Lohfink answers with an interesting description of the growth of the Canon. He begins with the analogy of a scholar who begins to fill a new bookcase with books:

<sup>41</sup> An application of this conception of "final author" to the question of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel would mean that the only inspired author of the Gospel would be the final redactor. Nowadays, critical scholars deny that the final redactor was John the son of Zebedee. For the details, cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to St. John*, I-XII (New York, 1966) xxiv-xxxix.

<sup>42</sup> Lohfink, *op. cit.*, 31.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.*, 32-33.

Whenever a book was added, or another taken away, no part of the total meaning or of the statement contained in the other books which stood on the shelves was altered. Thus, according to the views of that period, books of the Bible which already had been accepted into the canon remained the same when another book was taken into the canon. They said exactly the same thing as before. They had long received their final form.<sup>44</sup>

In further describing the nineteenth century view of the Canon, Lohfink calls attention to the following characteristics: (1) the unity of Scripture was assured by its divine Author; (2) this divine Author preserved the sacred books from the appearance of contradictions; (3) each book came into the Canon as an independent entity and enjoying its own inerrancy. Obviously, such a view of the nature and growth of the Canon precluded any question of the fundamental unity inherent in the Bible itself. As a result of the new critical studies on the growth of the Canon, the above somewhat static conception has ceded to a conception more evolutionary in character. Lohfink writes: "The growth of the Canon seems to be no more than a further stage, somewhat different in form, of the process which brought the individual books into being."<sup>45</sup> Lohfink offers a detailed and informative treatment of how recent studies on the relationship of the Prophets to the Pentateuch reflect the new understanding of the unity of the Canon.<sup>46</sup> These studies, particularly those concerned with examples of prophetic influence on the Book of Deuteronomy, support Lohfink's position regarding the interrelationship of the canonical books: "This shows that no book of the Bible was read except through the *analogia scripturae*—within the unity of meaning of the whole scripture."<sup>47</sup>

The Canon, says Lohfink, was considered to be a single

<sup>44</sup> *Op. cit.*, 34.

<sup>45</sup> *Op. cit.*, 34-35.

<sup>46</sup> *Op. cit.*, 35-36.

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.*, 36.

book. Any addition to it altered the total statement of the previous parts. The Old Testament Canon, as it grew, was constantly moving toward a final meaning. As long as the Canon continued to grow, no single book within the Canon had attained its ultimate meaning. Lohfink describes this process of taking a book into the Canon as an act of authorship, affecting the growth of each book and, consequently, of the Bible as a whole.<sup>48</sup> The growth of the Old Testament Canon attained its full stature and, consequently, its fixed and final meaning at the moment when the Old Testament as such was received into the New Testament. By "New Testament" Lohfink means "not the collection of New Testament books, which was still to have its own history, but the reality itself which is reflected in these books."<sup>49</sup> Lohfink notes that Jesus, the Apostles, and the primitive Church decided that the Old Testament Canon was to form "the enduring background history and document of the New Testament which had come in Christ."<sup>50</sup> This was the final addition made to the Old Testament. Lohfink thinks the addition made the New Testament a sort of sacred writer: "Like every previous addition, this once again changed the pattern of meaning in the Old Testament as a whole. Thus, to use paradoxical language, one could say that in the sense of the dogmatic doctrine of inspiration the New Testament was one of the 'sacred writers' of the Old Testament."<sup>51</sup> What is the unifying force of the Old Testament? Lohfink answers: the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament given by Jesus and the New Testament writers. He sees in this Christological intention the unitive force which makes the Old and New Testaments a single book. He maintains that "only within this all-embracing unity is the sense of each individual statement finally determined."<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>52</sup> *Op. cit.*, 39.

Turning his attention to the interpretation of the biblical text itself, Lohfink describes clearly what he understands by the term "literal sense." It is not confined to that sense obtained by the use of the historical and critical method, but must be extended to the traditional theological concept of the literal sense.<sup>53</sup> Lohfink describes the "fuller sense" of the Old Testament as the one intended both by God and by the New Testament, the final author of the Old Testament, as we saw above. He claims that this concept of the fuller sense is similar to the hermeneutic principle of the Fathers and of the Scholastics also. Nowadays this doctrine of the "spiritual sense" is exemplified especially in the writings of Henri De Lubac.<sup>54</sup> Lohfink is careful not to deny the validity of "purely historical exegesis, as it is now carried out at the present day with such vigor."<sup>55</sup> Considered as an initial and transitional phase of the process of exegesis, historical exegesis is admitted to be "an irreplaceable necessity."<sup>56</sup> However, he finds the scope of historical criticism incomplete when it limits its study to the layers of meaning within the Old Testament itself.<sup>57</sup> Here he must face the crucial question: what does the careful study of the historical meaning of successive layers of biblical texts really contribute to the final meaning derived from the study of the Bible as a whole? It is a problem as yet unsolved. Lohfink agrees that he himself cannot determine just what form his intended exegetical process should take. He concedes that in practice the inerrant sense of Scripture will be reached in the study of biblical theology, that is, in the study of the theology of the Bible as a whole. He admits

<sup>53</sup> *Op. cit.*, 43, where Lohfink writes: "This 'theological' sense means nothing other than the meaning of the Scripture read as a whole and in the *analogia fidei*. When theological tradition refers to the 'literal sense' as inerrant, it is always assuming this 'theological' understanding of the concept."

<sup>54</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959-1964).

<sup>55</sup> Lohfink, *op. cit.*, 148.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Lohfink, *op. cit.*, 148.



that at the present time no such adequate work exists. He suggests that perhaps we should look towards the construction of a more biblically oriented dogmatic theology. What Lohfink has done is (1) to insist upon the study of the doctrine of the Bible as a whole and to explain why this must be done; (2) to lay bare the problems arising from historical and critical exegesis when it is related to the study of the Bible as a whole; (3) to urge scholars to work towards the construction of an adequate biblical theology along dogmatic lines. He has left unsolved the role to be played by historical and critical exegesis in contributing to the final meaning of the Bible.

### C. Reflections of Pierre Benoit

Pierre Benoit has been preoccupied with the problem of biblical inspiration and hermeneutics for a long time. His writings on these subjects range over more than a quarter of a century.<sup>58</sup> I present here some of his reflections drawn from the address which he gave to the International Congress of Theology of Vatican II in September 1966.<sup>59</sup> In this address Benoit com-

<sup>58</sup> Among Benoit's more important works on this subject are: *La Prophétie* (with P. Synave), (Paris, 1947); Engl. trans. by A. Dulles and T. Sheridan, *Prophecy and Inspiration* (New York, 1961); *L'inspiration biblique selon Mgr. Florit*, in *Revue Biblique* 57 (1951) 609-610; *La Septante est-elle inspirée?*, in *Vom Wort des Lebens* (Münster, 1951) 41-49; repr. in *Exégèse et théologie* (Paris, 1961) 41-49; *Inspiration*, in *Initiation biblique*, ed. A. Robert and A. Tricot (3rd ed., Paris, 1954) 6-45; Engl. trans. by E. Arbez and M. McGuire, *A Guide to the Bible*, 1 (New York, 1960) 9-64; *La doctrine de Neuman sur la Sainte Ecriture*, in *Revue Biblique* 61 (1964) 603-605; *Le sensus plenior de l'Ecriture*, in *Revue Biblique* 63 (1956) 285-287; *Note complémentaire sur l'inspiration*, in *Revue Biblique* 63 (1956) 416-422; *La plénitude de sens des Livres Saints*, in *Revue Biblique* 67 (1960) 161-196; *Inerrance biblique*, in *Catholicisme hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, ed. by G. Jacquemet, 5 (Paris, 1963) cols. 1710-1721; *Inspiration biblique*, *ibid.*, cols. 1539-1549; *L'inspiration des Septante d'après les pères*, in *L'homme devant Dieu* (Mélanges H. de Lubac) 1 (Paris, 1963) 169-187; *Révélation et inspiration selon la Bible, chez saint Thomas et dans les discussions modernes*, in *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963) 321-370; repr. in *Exégèse et théologie* 3 (1968) 90-142.

<sup>59</sup> Benoit, *Exégèse et théologie* 3 (Paris, 1968) 143-156. Originally given

mented on four major points of the *De Divina Revelatione* Constitution bearing on the truth of the Bible:

1. The truth of the Bible is not purely speculative but addressed to the whole man, not to his intellect only.
2. Biblical truth is communicated to men for the sake of salvation (*salutis causa*). It does not teach the truth of all sciences.
3. Biblical truth is communicated to men by men. It is necessary to appreciate fully all that this implies.
4. Biblical truth in its fullness is to be found in the whole Bible, not in any particular passage or book.

Benoit makes a valuable contribution to the truth of the Bible debate in his comments on the fourth point. He uses as his point of departure this conciliar text: "These books [of the Old Testament] though they also contain some things which are *incomplete and temporary*, nevertheless show us true divine pedagogy."<sup>60</sup> Benoit examines the phrase "incomplete and temporary."<sup>61</sup> He notes that Israel made only slow and gradual progress in her understanding of God's revelation:

In the Bible we notice a progress of revelation from the first generations to the end of the New Testament, and that, not only in the scientific domain, which does not directly affect the message, but even in moral or in dogma.<sup>62</sup>

In the words "incomplete and temporary" Benoit sees also the way opening for a new conception of inerrancy.<sup>63</sup> He sees God as accommodating Himself to the Israelites' inability to learn profoundly everything at the beginning. The early Israel-

in Latin, the French title is: *La vérité dans la Sainte Ecriture*.

<sup>60</sup> In AAS 58 (1966) 825 #15: "Qui libri, quamvis etiam imperfecta et temporaria contineant, veram tamen paedagogiam divinam demonstrant."

<sup>61</sup> Benoit, *Exégèse et théologie* 3 (Paris, 1968) 153.

<sup>62</sup> Benoit, *La vérité dans la Bible*, in *La Vie Spirituelle* (April, 1966), 410.

<sup>63</sup> *Exégèse et théologie* 3 (Paris, 1968), 153.

ites could not be expected to receive in every text all of God's revelation on a given subject. God does not reveal the whole or any given truth in every phrase of the Bible. Benoit holds that God will even allow His partial truth to be clothed in a word or expression which God may have to "correct" later by replacing it with a more proper expression:

'Corriger,' ai-je-dit. En effet la pédagogie divine n'a pas procédé seulement par mode de compléments et de perfectionnements; elle a opéré aussi de corrections, voire des suppressions. Ceci est important et doit être clairement vu.<sup>64</sup>

Benoit thinks that in the unfolding of divine revelation we must admit not only a progression from the imperfect to the perfect (which no one would deny), but also from erroneous views to correct ones.<sup>65</sup> God never taught such errors, Benoit insists, but he permitted, for a time, His own truth to be clothed in elements which were sometimes deficient. These deficient expressions would be replaced in God's good time by more perfect expressions of His truth. Benoit spells out this divine pedagogy with respect to the Old Testament doctrines of *sheol* and *herem*.<sup>66</sup> To the question what is inspired and inerrant in sacred Scripture Benoit replies that the word of God is inspired and inerrant not in isolation but only in relationship to the ensemble of inspired truth which assumes into a final synthesis what is not "incomplete and temporary." This assumption into a final synthesis will take place when what is erroneous or deficient will have been replaced by other and more perfect revelation. God in His wise providence took many centuries to unfold His divine truth. To attain this truth, Benoit writes, we must study the whole work, that is, we must retrace all the steps from the first imperfect groupings to the full revelation in Christ.<sup>66</sup> No stages of the full revelation should be neglected. To accom-

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *La vérité dans la Bible*, 411.

<sup>66</sup> *Exégèse et théologie* 3 (Paris, 1968) 154.

plish this task the exegete-theologian must study each text in the light of the whole Bible and be guided by the analogy of faith and by tradition. This process must be followed in the interpretation of the New as well as the Old Testament.<sup>67</sup>

Benoit's reflections on the "incomplete and temporary" elements in the Old Testament as well as his description of how a given biblical truth ought to be traced from its early stages to its full revelation in the New Testament as interpreted within the Church constitute, I suggest, a significant clarification and a specific contribution to the truth of the Bible debate.

#### A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MARY

It would seem that the first step towards a biblical theology of Mary involves some sort of consensus on at least the essential elements and goals of such a theology. The debate over the nature and limits of biblical theology is almost two centuries old. It began with Gabler's attempt to define the limits of biblical theology and to distinguish it from dogmatic theology.<sup>68</sup> In his penetrating study of the possibility of an Old Testament theology, Roland de Vaux<sup>69</sup> sharply criticized Gerhard Von Rad's *Old Testament Theology* precisely on the score of Von Rad's concept of the nature of biblical theology, thereby reminding us that the debate is far from being concluded.

De Vaux insists on the unity of the word of God as found in the Old and New Testaments because "both were written under the inspiration of God, both contain his word, and this word can only be understood when it is grasped in its entirety."<sup>70</sup> This unity of the two Testaments is a datum of the faith "but the theologian who accepts it can no longer con-

<sup>67</sup> *Op. cit.*, 155.

<sup>68</sup> Johann Philipp Gabler, *Oratio de justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus* (Altdorf, 1787); included in his *Opuscula Academica* 2 (Ulm, 1831) 179-198.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Roland de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Doubleday & Co., 1971) 49-62.

<sup>70</sup> *Op. cit.*, 60.

sider one of the Testaments to the exclusion of the other."<sup>71</sup> There should not be, continues de Vaux, a theology of the Old Testament *and* a theology of the New Testament. Rather, there should be one biblical theology making use of all the facts of revelation. To the objection that a biblical theology is impossible because there are in both Testaments a number of theologies which cannot be systematized, de Vaux answers.

This is all quite true. But if the books of the Old Testament and the books of the New Testament are inspired by the same God, if they bear witness to the workings of the same God in the world, if they contain the teaching of the same God to mankind, then there must be in them a unity which is the unity of the divine plan and of divine revelation. It is the task of the theologian to discover this unity. Biblical theology and dogmatic theology must not be set up against each other because the distinction between two theologies must be done away with.<sup>72</sup>

De Vaux maintains that Von Rad has not written an Old Testament Theology book but rather an excellent history of the faith of Israel or of the religion of the Old Testament. In our quest for the biblical truth concerning Mary we must beware of falling into the same error: that of collecting, examining minutely, and then presenting the commonly accepted sense of a number of given passages. This would surely indicate what different books or different authors said about marian texts but it would not be a biblical theology of Mary. De Vaux<sup>73</sup> recognizes that the study of God's truth is difficult, partly because of man's incapacity to understand God fully, partly because of the distance which separates the one and infinite truth from its human expressions. "But," he adds, "the effort must never be abandoned and the task of biblical theology, of the-

<sup>71</sup> *Op. cit.*, 61.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Op. cit.*, 62.

ology itself, is to scrutinize the Word of God in order to come a little closer to the Truth of God."<sup>74</sup>

The attempt to fashion an adequate biblical doctrine of Mary cannot afford to neglect the concept of God's faithfulness proposed by Loretz. This concept must somehow serve to integrate into the Christ-event the biblical doctrine concerning our Blessed Lady. Heinrich Schlier has pointed out that the truth of Scripture does not consist in the correctness of the information it gives on particular historical facts and dates, but rather Scripture's truth is "the peremptory claim of the promise and advent in history of God's fidelity historically fulfilled in the act of judgment and grace in Jesus Christ."<sup>74</sup> Schlier adds that though this truth of the Bible is expressed in various literary forms, "they too speak to him [i.e., the reader or hearer] of the truth of God's fidelity in the history of Israel and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ."<sup>75</sup> What is difficult about achieving this integration arises from the as yet unclear relationship between God's faithfulness and the presentation of the mystery of Mary in Scripture, a mystery entrusted to the Church for elucidation. This leads us to the even more difficult question of the relationship between historical and critical exegesis and doctrinal reflection. This has had a significant impact on marian studies especially.

As you are well aware, a good deal of substantially permanent work was produced by mariologists in the nineteen fifties and early sixties. Some of the conclusions proposed in these works were challenged on the grounds that they were the fruit of later theologizing on the text. Raymond Brown, in his excellent commentary on St. John, calls attention to this position: "On the grounds that papal citations of the passage constitute an authoritative interpretation, D. Unger, *art. cit.*, would maintain that the spiritual motherhood is Roman Catholic Marian *doc-*

<sup>74</sup> Heinrich Schlier, *The Relevance of the New Testament* (New York), 63.

<sup>75</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64.

trine. However, many Catholic exegetes, for example, Wikenhouser, see such an interpretation as the fruit of later theologizing upon the text, a theologizing that goes considerably beyond any provable intention of the evangelist."<sup>76</sup>

My question at this point is not whether Father Unger presented his case well or badly, nor what is the kind of authoritative force papal citations exert, but rather what kind of theologizing is objectionable? If there is a question here of formal, scientific theology with truly illative conclusions, obviously the objection is valid. Such an *illatio* in the argumentation would introduce a premise from pure reason resulting in a truly theological conclusion but one not definable, at least according to the more common opinion of theologians. But what if it is a question, not of scientific theology, but of sapiential theology? Sapiential theology is explicative rather than scientific. The explication arises from doctrinal reflection, guidance from the *analogia fidei*, and an exact understanding of papal pronouncements in the sense intended by their writers. If this kind of theology benefits also from the biblical procedure indicated by Benoit, that is carefully retracing all the stages of a given biblical truth and examining it in the light of its presence in the final synthesis of revelation, then what we have is a work of integral, not merely, formal theology. I would like to see the whole question of the narrative of Mary at the foot of the Cross re-opened and re-examined by thoroughly equipped integral theologians.

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<sup>76</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible 29A (Garden City, N.Y., 1970), 924.