

EDITORIAL

TO consider the nature of Christian doctrine, and the most effective way of teaching and learning it, is in fact to realize that it must become a truth personally assimilated and lived instead of remaining merely a proposition assented to as true by the mind, with relatively little effect upon the personal life. This is a fundamental problem of all Christian education, a problem which confronts teachers of every kind, whether they are parents responsible for their children in the family or teachers in schools and universities, seminaries and religious orders. There is an ever-present danger lest a dichotomy should introduce itself between the intellectual apprehension of the truths of faith and the life of union with God, the entrance to which is by the gateway of prayer and worship.

Where separation begins to appear between knowledge and affective love, where the motive power of knowledge does not also move to the love of him who is known, a divorce will occur between what is known and what is lived, between doctrine and life. The result will be that knowledge becomes either an end in itself or it ceases to exert any influence. This can be, and sometimes is so, both in the religious knowledge class at school and in the seminary or religious order, in the study both of the catechism and also of the manual of theology or even of the *Summa Theologica*. The catechism may be turned into a barren formula and the *Summa* into a means of learning only about Christ without learning to know him. Theological study may become an end in itself, an intricate and absorbing pattern of truth in which the correct arrangement of the pattern comes to be unconsciously regarded as of greater moment than the truth itself. It may, on the other hand, become no more than an intellectual burden, to be carried because studies must be got through and examinations passed; one must know one's theology. In neither case does the study of theology lead to the Heart of Christ and in both the very love of Christ itself, the all-important issue of the spiritual life, may be impoverished because of the lack of affective knowledge which should be its stimulus.

God's revelation of himself to the world was made in history, in the sacred history of a chosen people, in mighty acts that he did and does for the redemption of mankind in and through that people: *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world* (Hebrews i, 1-2). The Bible is the record of this revelation of himself by God to men, a record of things done and words spoken. All of it, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, points either forward or backwards to the consummation of God's activity towards us in Christ. This is the good news of salvation. The Bible is not concerned so much with what God is as with what he has done and continues to do in our regard. The Word of God comes to us directly in it and speaks to our condition.

The function of theology is the exploration and co-ordination by rational analysis of the content of the scriptural revelation, under the guidance of Tradition, the living voice of the Church. It assists us in a clearer understanding of and penetration into the meaning of the Mystery of Salvation. All theology therefore must be rooted in the Scriptures. It cannot take their place, because the Scriptures, as interpreted by the Church, are alone the Word of God to men. Theology by its rational presentation of the Mystery of Salvation embodies in human language the response of faith to God's revelation. It makes clearer to the human mind the depth of mystery that is contained in it. But it cannot exhaust the meaning of what has been revealed, nor can it ever be a substitute for revelation. For the power of faith, complemented and perfected by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, has a far greater capacity for penetrating into its mystery than the most acute and subtle rational analysis can of itself effect.

The great theologians of the Church, amongst whom St Thomas is a leader, have always been deeply versed in the Scriptures, and deeply imbued with the biblical spirit and outlook. The Church prescribes, as her official prayer for all priests, the Divine Office, which is largely made up of the Scriptures, the psalms, the prophecies, the sacred history and the law. Every teacher then, and this will include parents, who are responsible for laying the foundations of religious teaching in the minds and hearts of their children, should be a biblical student, not of course in the way of specialist or technical scholarship, but by devout,

regular and prayerful study of the Bible as the source of doctrine and the food of prayer.

Children should be taught from their earliest years in its vivid concrete idiom and at an early age too should be introduced to it as the material of their thoughts and prayers, to be pondered over till it becomes part of the texture of their lives. In this way, and with full effect perhaps only in this way, will the teaching of the Church in its catechisms, creeds and dogmatic definitions, become deeply rooted in mind and heart and fully fruitful in the will.



DOGMA AND MENTAL HEALTH*

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'Quicumque vult salvus esse, ante omnia opus est ut teneat catholicam fidem' ('Whosoever wishes to be *salvus*—"saved", "salved" or "healthy"—it is required before all else that he hold the Catholic Faith'). *'Quam nisi quisque integram inviolatamque servaverit, absque dubio in aeternum peribit'* ('Which faith, unless a man keep it whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish in eternity').

THESE opening words of the *Athanasium*, and countless other pronouncements of the Church to similar effect, have been an occasion of much opprobrium and of genuine perplexity. They would indeed be detestable, even blasphemous, were they understood to mean that God arbitrarily insists that the recitation of a right password, e.g. *homoousios filioque, transubstantiatio*, ensured admission through the heavenly gates, while the utterance of an incorrect formula—*homoiousios, subordinatio, consubstantiatio*, was a meaningless guarantee of the pains of hell. Such monstrous misconceptions are not at all behind the Church's meticulous formulations of dogma or her vigorous anathemas to heresy. She knows full well that, as the Vatican Council says, 'Divine mysteries by their very nature so transcend the created mind, that even when delivered by revelation and

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