

EDITORIAL

IT may be that some readers of this number of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT will complain that an undue share of it is given to what concerns nuns and priests, and even some of the nuns and priests may feel that their share is too exclusively Dominican in its colour. Were it to be made this criticism would, I think, be superficial, for the connecting link that unifies these articles, diverse as their particular subject-matter may be, is the importance of intelligent insight into and sympathy with the characteristics, temper of mind, ethos and outlook of people different from ourselves. This is indispensable to a right relationship with all those with whom our life brings us into contact, our neighbours; for upon it all real communication and in consequence all real community depends.

The attitude of mind which instinctively seeks that insight and sympathy is a marked characteristic of the Dominican outlook and ethos. It is of course fundamental to the apostolate of the teacher and the preacher, in the widest and most inclusive sense of those terms. This the Dominican pre-eminently seeks to be, since by vocation he is specially dedicated to the search for truth in persons, things and the human situations they combine to create. If then principles and the considerations that may arise from them are set out here in the context of a Dominican nuns community, a Dominican school for boys or even in an assessment of the meaning of class distinctions implicit in some familiar second nocturn phrases, it does not follow that they will be valueless to a much wider audience. Are we not all, simply as Catholics, teachers and, in a sense, preachers, whether we preach from the pulpit, or teach in a school, or in the family as do parents, or in our business environment or our social contacts, as we all of us do, at least by our example and the hidden influence of the principles upon which our life and actions are based? And are we not all members of at least one community in which a right relationship to those who constitute it, based upon our own relationship to God, is of supreme importance.

All this is, I believe, of particular moment in the sphere of religious education. Catholics cannot but be concerned over the problem of what is called the leakage, the high proportion of

those, whether children of school-leaving age or others who have reached adulthood, who cease altogether from the practice of their religion. It is generally agreed, I suppose, that the majority of these do so because though they have been through a Catholic school and attended their parish church, at least in childhood, they have never been taught their religion either in the home, or in school and church, in a way that has caught the mind through the imagination and so moved the will to action.

Surely the main defect here, though there are of course many others, is a defect of insight, sympathy and understanding, a defect in the human relationship between teacher and taught. Children, and indeed adults also for the most part, learn truth in a concrete vital realization of human situations in which the appeal to the mind through the imagination plays a very big part; they do not learn by abstract propositions. Yet religion is taught in the school much more by means of the abstract formulas of the catechism than by an exposition which begins, as the Apostolic preaching from Pentecost onwards began, by preaching a Person, a vivid presentation of all that Christ said and did and suffered for our salvation, and the embodiment of this in concrete and visible sacramental signs which mediate the life of Christ's Mystical Body. If this imperfection in a vital human relationship, resulting in failure to realize the psychological needs of the young and immature in their religious education, is the cause of much damage, scarcely less harmful is the same defective relationship sometimes existing between preacher and hearer. In the pulpit the language and idiom of thought is too often heavily coloured by the technicality and abstract approach of the theological schools and manuals. The very use and study of these in the seminary, absolutely necessary though it is in itself for a thorough intellectual comprehension of the truths of Faith, is rendered almost inoperative unless its technical and abstract idiom is re-thought into a vital and penetrating medium of communication which has power to bring these truths to life in the minds and hearts of the non-theologically educated congregation. The failure to achieve this re-thinking is not seldom the cause of a certain despair about the possibility of effective preaching, with the resultant falling back upon 'a few (unprepared) words' or an indiscriminate fulmination against slackness and indifference. 'And the hungry sheep look up and are not fed.'

Much thought, effort and self-sacrificing love needs to be directed today towards the setting up of a relationship which will result in more effective communication in the family, between teacher and taught in our schools, and between preacher and hearer in our churches; a relationship of person with person and mind with mind, which will issue in a vital and fruitful contact. We hope to make from time to time in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* some contribution to this thought and effort.



THE ENGLISH SPIRIT*

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IF we were to consider the connection between spirituality and art in view of our modern situation we might easily conclude that there is little to tie them together. The world is full of obviously good Christians, devout living, earnest and regular at prayer; while the churches in which they pray are cluttered with hideous objects of piety and resound to the most dismal hymns. Bad sculpture and painting and bad music are associated with devout Christian folk. But it is impossible for man to see his own age in true perspective; we can only guess at what is growing or declining in our own life-times. But when we look back in history patterns begin to stand out before us in clearer outlines. And if we look back at our own English scene we can see examples of spiritual revival and decline and can examine the various arts that accompanied these phases. Thus in the age of Dunstan there was a great revival in the Christian spirit of the country, and in fact this can be detected in its contemporary art. We may not know much of the music of the time in this island, though the tenth century was a peak period in general for the chant. But if we examine the drawings of the monks we find a new life and liveliness in the illustrations of their manuscripts. Professor Wormauld has given us in his *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* one very interesting comparison of a Psalter copied at Canterbury from an original Utrecht MS about the year 1000. The Canterbury artist has copied the illustrations figure by figure, hill by hill, tree by tree. And yet in copying the monk has introduced an

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