

but of real corporeal human beings, though the condition of the body may, as St Paul says, be as different from our present perishable state as is the plant from the seed.

Deterring Independence

TOWARDS A CATECHETICAL RENEWAL IN ENGLAND

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English Catholics today are facing a serious balance-of-payments crisis. Publishers' lists carry a large number of translations of theological books from the continent, and it is hard to think of more than a handful of English theological works, except, of course, Newman's, which have been exported. *Honest to God* has just appeared in the German book-shops, and of course one can always buy the novels of Muriel Spark, Graham Greene, and Bruce Marshall. It will take some time before our imports stimulate a spirit of renewal strong enough to produce a comparable movement that can make its own export contribution. But the recent interest in imported books is a welcome sign of the breakdown of English isolationism. In the past we have tenaciously resisted what Kingsley Amis calls 'book-foisting propaganda on behalf of abroad and its inhabitants'. Our deep-rooted national immunity to the influences of abroad can only, happily, go so far in a Church that is Catholic; sooner or later movements generated and developed abroad reach the stage of maturity at which the church adopts them officially; then they become compulsory imports whether we like it or not.

Practically speaking this is a very uncomfortable position to be in. We find ourselves having to accept reforms of which we have had very little knowledge or practical experience, and to which we have made no specifically English contribution. A movement which has developed in a lively Church experience abroad, in theological writing, discussions and experiments, suddenly arrives on our doorstep in its finished form. It takes us by surprise and we have to undergo enormous adjustments in order to incorporate it into our own tradition. It is foreign on two

counts: it is something that we were not prepared for, and it is something which has developed without any English contribution. So we are always being surprised. We were surprised by the liturgical reforms; to the majority of continental Catholics these reforms were seen as concessions to experiments which had been going on for years—a sort of compromise along the way. To us in England they came as a surprise; they caused immense problems of adaptation; very few ever dreamed that such things could come to pass. There was practically no literature or practical experience. The same applies to recent changes in ecumenical and biblical thinking; they have caught us off-balance. What we used to view as unnecessary and disturbing eccentricity, and often, to be frank, as something dangerously uncatholic, now appears to be a normal, indeed central position in Catholic thinking. If we had participated earlier we would find it a good deal easier to be articulate now; our progressive development would not jolt so. In every case, and I think this is especially significant, the laity are the ones who are having to suffer. A Catholic who had been brought up strictly on the catechism is now being told from all sides that scripture is the food of his life, the point from which his Catholic thinking should grow. So he starts to read the Bible and becomes very discouraged indeed; he has not been brought up within a tradition of Bible reading and interpretation. He might even, as is often the case, have got hold of the idea that this was a particularly Protestant activity, and cultivated in himself something approaching suspicion, or even scorn for Bible readers. These sudden jolts are very disturbing for the ordinary layman, particularly when we find that we have had little training ourselves in introducing people to this activity. If we could have taken some part in these reforms at an early stage we would be better prepared now, and might well have made a distinctive English contribution to their final forms.

This may well seem a rather round about way of introducing Fr Hofinger's new work on catechetics: *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*.¹ There are ample signs, however, that we may be in for another surprise very soon, and Fr Hofinger's book might just have appeared in time to cushion the jolt. The catechetical movement has been under way for the twenty-five years or so since Fr Joseph Jung-

¹THE ART OF TEACHING CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, by J. Hofinger; Sands and Co Ltd, 18s. Fr Hofinger, it will be remembered, was the editor of the addresses made at the Eichstätt Conference which appeared here as *Teaching All Nations: a Symposium on Modern Catechetics*. (Herder 1961). An extensive review of this important book appeared in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Jan., 1962. In it I raised most of the problems which I am dealing with here in a different form.

mann's classic work, *Die Frohbotschaft und Unsere Glaubensverkündigung*² began to question the efficacy of text-book theology in teaching, and to advocate in its place a return to the primitive kerygmatic form of primitive Christian teaching. Jungmann asked for a theology orientated to preaching and teaching, and his thesis was immediately supported and enlarged by other theologians (particularly at Innsbruck). From the very beginning the catechetical movement has been firmly grounded in a theological renewal; it is very far from being merely a practical movement to improve Catholic teaching. It has made a theological contribution which serious theologians have had to reckon with, and has challenged not only our school but also our seminary methods. To quote Fr Hofinger: 'In the meantime (since the last war) the belief has been gaining ground that a more pronounced kerygmatic orientation is needed in professional theology if we are to have a kerygmatic renewal in the field of catechetics. And it is a fact that in countries in which the necessity for a kerygmatic renewal in the education of priests has not yet made itself felt, there is, generally speaking, very little interest in a more kerygmatic approach to catechetics.' The suggestions of Jungmann and his followers have been largely influential in determining the form of seven recent European catechisms, and the basic claims of the movement are now generally accepted wherever catechetics is treated as a serious subject for study: in the chairs of catechetics in universities, and, of course, at the famous *Lumen Vitae* centre in Brussels. The enormous range of this movement, the strong support it has received from leading theologians, the conquests it has made in official circles, and the recent world-wide support it has received at the Eichstätt Conference seem to me to suggest that its conclusions may very well become a standard form of Catholic education not only in our schools but also in our seminaries. It is indeed the thoroughness, the comprehensiveness, and the flexibility of this movement which is so interesting, the way it pulls together so many strands in contemporary Catholic thinking. It has boldly gone to the core of Christian teaching, stated it as a theological activity, and then attempted to see the wide variety of contemporary problems in the light of this theology.

The question arises once again how far we are prepared for the inevitable importation of this revolution in our education, and what sort of contribution we are making from our own considerable educational experience. Is this going to be another case of foreign imposition? If so

²We had to wait till 1961 for a translation of this important work. It appeared as *The Good News and its Proclamation* (New York, Sadlier).

our adjustments will have to be very much more widespread than in previous cases. This movement is quite obviously something you can't nibble at.

For these reasons it seems to me indisputable that any steps we take to improve our educational system now must be firmly in the direction of this movement. Fr Hofinger's book serves as an excellent introduction. In itself simple, it refers at the same time to the areas where our thinking must be rigorous. It contains a general survey of the ideas of the movement and gives some thirty catechetical instructions which can actually be put into practice now; there is a section dealing with the vocation of a the teacher, including lay teachers, sisters and priests, and there is an appendix which gives a synopsis of the conclusions of the Eichstätt Conference. This is a book written mainly for the teacher, but it is also the sort of book theologians should read; the bibliography, for instance, gives you a good idea of the breadth and depth of the literature that is supporting the movement. A lot of the books recommended are still only in German and French, but, thanks to the recent interest shown in the movement by the American Church, much is getting translated into English.

It is not only in the Church itself that we find a thorough re-appraisal of education; the problem, as we all know, is becoming critical in English society. Political commentators have been suggesting for some time (even from before the election scare) that education is going to become *the* political problem of the future. The readjustment of our educational system, as the Robbins Report has, to a large extent, shown, is being thought of not as just one of the problems that face our society, but the central problem. We are talking now of shaping the growth of our society through our attitude to education; not just of bringing economic prosperity by gearing our system to modern development, but of deepening the value of life, of consciously creating our society through education. Education is being thought of by many not just as a way of floating reasonably well equipped young people out into the heterogeneous mass of society, not just as a way of insuring that business and industry are going to be supplied with recruits, but as a conscious determination, a conscious humanising of this society itself, both as an element in world society, and as a form of mature human living. The importance of these ideas is the relationship they stress between education and society. Society can reform itself by recreating its educational system; society and education are intimately connected.

Questions of this sort are inevitably going to be raised about Catholic

education. What sort of society are we educating our children into? How does the relationship, education and society, work out in our system? What sort of positive notion have we Catholics got of society? How far is it structurally the same sort of educational system that was evolved away back in our past for integrating Catholic children into a society that was already Catholic (in the medieval, or, say, the contemporary Irish or Spanish sense)? Have we merely given ground and withdrawn this old system back to a prepared position, substituting the Catholic family, the Catholic environment, for society in the larger sense? That is, do we still only educate for a Catholic society while conceding the ever shrinking area of this notion of society, the only adjustment necessary being a system of barbed wire apologetic entanglement marking the boundaries between the society for which we are educating, and the vast areas we have had to concede³?

I think we must at least admit that there is a vague uncertainty about the answers we would give. Catholic education is still often thought of as an activity taking place in an enclosed, segregated, privileged society. Success is judged in terms of satisfying examiners with the answers of our out-of-date catechism. Catholic schools can tend to be thought of as a sort of enclosed area of pure Catholic life. Here at least the child will fulfil his obligations. 'At least he will behave as a decent Catholic so long as he is in our hands.' There is a comforting sense of succeeding in Catholicism here, even if afterwards the child will drift away from the faith. What has happened, I think, is that we are now granting that even the last stage of the openness of Catholic education (educating into a family-parochial society) must be given up, and we are now doing little more than educating into Catholic schools. The lines have been withdrawn as far as they can go; the notion of society has become the prisoner of Catholic schools.

This is, of course, only to sketch patterns in mythological form. It would be absurd to suggest that many Catholic teachers are not aware of the problems of society, and that they are not making attempts to overcome the difficulty. Besides we must always bear in mind that the complicated problems of integrating and maintaining Catholic schools in our state system have left us with little time to deal with the problem

³The fact that some Catholic writers have complained that Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra* lays too great weight on the importance of society to the detriment of the family tends to indicate that a considerable shift in emphasis has been made. In his commentary on this encyclical (*Die Sozialenzyklika Papst Johannes' XXIII* (Herder) Fr Eberhard Welty OP admits the shift and rejects the complaint.

I am raising here. This makes it all the more urgent that we should start to probe this catechetical area. The forms I have been sketching do, I think, represent a tendency in our thinking, and they are substantiated by our failure to take any general measures to reform our catechetical system (however thorough we may have been in other areas) and to indicate clearly what sort of society our education is in fact referring to. In a sense our success in integrating the Church into the state educational system has even tended to sharpen this problem. The inevitable effect of limiting the reference range of our education is to throw everything outside this range (the conceded territory) into a sort of indifferent darkness. If the only society we are educating into is restricted to what we consider to be the area of pure Catholic practice, then the area outside—the large open society in which our children are going to live—is stripped of seriousness. Our inability to be articulate about society necessarily limits the reference range of education. Our tendency to fall into an unchristian distrust of society not only withdraws the notion of seriousness into the narrow confines of school life, but also, and this seems to me extremely important, divests our education itself of any seriousness. We get to the stage where there is no seriousness anywhere.

Recently I spoke to a young girl who had two years ago left her convent school to work in the city. Her extremely critical attitude towards her Catholic education was in no sense a flippant teenage rebellion against authority, in no sense a rejection of something serious for something worldly, quite the contrary. Her fury consisted in the sense of discovering seriousness for the first time, and having nothing in her past that could react to it. She had never been taught to apply her religion to contemporary problems; society had always been defined negatively as a place where she must somehow keep her school religion alive; outside her school religion, in the conceded territory, everything was either indifferent or evil. She had not been given a religion that could grow up in society, she felt genuinely betrayed by the Church not only because she wanted to be Catholic and found it almost impossible, but also because her apologetics—the way she had been trained to be defensive to society—had placed her at a disadvantage in society. She had, for instance, learned from her non-Catholic friends a much more expansive, serious language about God. Her catechetical background which had been thorough enough had lacked all along that element of personal seriousness in terms of God and society which would have made it possible for her to grow up as a

Catholic.⁴ She had to choose between preserving her school religion, and maturing in the world of open society. The two simply wouldn't grow into each other.

This failure to provide an education which could be capable of forming attitudes about and becoming passionately involved as a Catholic in the moral seriousness of society lies at the roots of much that is disquieting about the attitudes of many Catholics in society today. This is very much the problem, for instance, that Hochhuth was trying to raise in his much misunderstood play *The Representative*. It is quite untrue to suggest, as some people have, that this is merely an attempt to shift the guilt problem from the German people.⁵ Young Catholics and Evangelicals in Germany today are very much concerned with the failure of some Catholics to make a stand against events which have since become the absolute example of moral depravity. An older generation which talks about current immorality solely in terms of the slackening of sexual standards can fairly be questioned by a younger generation about their moral sensitivity to evils of society like racialisms, nuclear diplomacy and the perpetuation of class distinctions. It is frequently a cause of extreme embarrassment to young Catholics throughout Europe today to find that it is very often amongst the staunchest Catholics that one finds the most hair-raising reactionary views.⁶ The unpleasant suspicion keeps emerging that a misconceived education has not only made people immune to such problems (as being worldly—belonging to the conceded territory, outside Catholic thinking) but has actually injected them with some sense that they should be against progressive moral thinking.

Now it is precisely this blunting of seriousness that the catechetical movement has been concerned about. It has claimed that it is in large part

⁴Cf a new book by Friedrich Hahn—*Modern Literatur im kirchlichen Unterricht*. 'Religious instruction must have a firm biblical centre which is related to the real life of our times. This life finds its shape particularly in contemporary literature'. It goes on in this spirit to analyse works by Camus, Brecht, Sartre, Graham Greene and Kafka.

⁵The recent collection of reactions to Hochhuth's *Representative* in the Rowohlt paperback—*Summa Iniuria oder Durfte der Papst schweigen?*—indicates that German Catholics have understood this point in a much more authentic fashion than Catholics in other lands in which the play has been presented.

⁶A recent article in the magazine *Stern* publishes some pretty depressing figures about the percentage of German Catholics that take advantage of higher education. It goes on to suggest that Catholics in Germany have still to overcome a suspicion that higher education is 'socialist', 'liberal', 'scientific', 'progressive' and therefore unbecoming for Catholics.

the result of the abstract indirectness of the old catechetical methods. Fr Hofinger argues this point convincingly and makes the claim, which is indeed basic for the movement, that we must return once again to the scriptures for the source and methods of our instructions. The fourth chapter of this book is quite brilliant in its suggestiveness. 'We must,' he writes, 'initiate our students step by step into the mystery of Christ . . . primarily through a biblical-historical catechesis that leads to Christ through the telling of the story of salvation.' The basic historical pattern of catechetical instruction suggests an outline for a whole course of religious instruction, the progressive initiation of children throughout their school life into this structure, starting always from the history patterns of scripture and facing in them the problems of a mature religious faith today.

This is, of course, no easy task. The working out of such a scheme is far from complete; there is still some hesitation, for instance, about how far this scriptural basis can be extended. It seems to me, however, that it must be the *complete* framework for all that is taught. The child must be initiated at once into the world of scripture. The early response to history is the most direct, and it is at this level of immediate involvement in biblical history that the ground is laid for a developed, more sophisticated understanding. Of course it is vital that only certain stories be told; a general pattern of the framework must be traced at an early period.⁷ What we wish to teach the child about the practice of his religion should flow from these stories and should be shown itself to be our part in that story. The liturgy, our prayers, our Christian living is part of this saving history, as the mass is part of the last supper. Later problems about scripture should be tackled at the right age and discussed honestly within this historical framework; difficulties about history, after all, are an important element in what we call 'natural theology'. The great advantage in this system is that we should never have to approach scripture in the edgy apologetic fashion that a late introduction makes inevitable. The fundamental substance of catechetics in this form is a finding within the forms of scripture itself of the seriousness of the child both in school and in the life he is going to live in society.

Such a project could not be completed without the help of theologians, scripture scholars, experts in education, and child psychologists.

⁷A *Short Bible* arranged by Austin Farrer (Fontana Books 2s. 6d.), makes just this sort of intelligent theological selection from the Bible. The admirable introduction discusses the problem of selection and would be particularly helpful to teachers who are trying to work out this problem.

It is important that their contribution should be made within the context of the catechetical movement as a whole. No Catholic solutions can ignore the results which have already been achieved abroad; at the same time these results are not of the sort that can be immediately applied wholesale. A solution must be worked out for the English situation, and worked out by experts with a common purpose and a sense of the desperate seriousness of the situation. Until we can achieve such a unified effort we must make the best of what is to hand. Obviously we need more books on scripture at this level, and surely Catholic teachers should be encouraged to make use of some of the excellent books produced by non-catholics in England.⁸ This is an area in which England is particularly strong, and is greatly admired by continental Catholics. The LIFE OF THE SPIRIT has recently been offering its readers just this sort of extensive critical guidance. How many teachers, one wonders, have used it? We must also hope that publishers are going to provide us with more translations of foreign catechetical works (Catholic and Protestant), and that the interest of teachers will make it worth their while.⁹

I have tried to argue in this extended review of Fr Hofinger's book that it is high time that we make some positive attempts to bring our catechetical thinking and practice into line with the flourishing continental (and indeed practically world-wide) movement of catechetical renewal.¹⁰ At the same time I have tried to bring out the evidence to show that we have no cause at all to feel complacent with our present system. Since scattered suggestions tended to control the latter part of the article perhaps I will be forgiven for squeezing one more in in the form of a final question. We use the word 'education' and qualify it 'Catholic' as though our activities were another rather specialised form of ordinary education. We have our schools and our universities

⁸e.g., *The Riddle of the New Testament*, by Hoskyns and Davie (Faber paperback) remains a classic in guiding us towards the sort of theological view of the gospels which is indispensable for the catechetical method.

⁹Two recent works which would be extremely helpful are: *Die biblische Geschichte im Unterricht* (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht) which discusses the problem of moving from exegesis to catechesis, and gives several examples out of the Old and New Testament of how this can be achieved. It also discusses the problem in general terms and makes some useful criticisms of the present use of scripture in the classroom. Also *Die Christusverkündigung in der Schule* (Styria)—a collection of essays from the Catechetical Centre at the University of Graz.

¹⁰The small group of educationalist in England who are already drawing on continental experience will, I hope, forgive me for making generalisations that seem to bypass their efforts.

(seminaries) just like the state. In actual fact Catholic education is something theological, something which has to do with the nature of the Church. Why in that case do we practically entirely ignore the education of all those Catholics who are neither in schools nor seminaries? The very interesting experiments that are being made on the continent and in America of forming small groups of parents together to meet in their homes and discuss their religion seem to be the ideal form for such adult education. The LIFE OF THE SPIRIT hopes to be able to publish an article on this experiment in the near future.

Towards a Theology of Education¹

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The present debate that is going on at the frontiers about the nature of theology has for most people yet to be distilled and passed on. There is a severe and crucial change taking place that has been given a noticeable liberation through the climate of dialogue created by the Second Vatican Council. Its implications are profound and excitement awaits all who witness the extension of theology as it is brought to bear on secular social problems in particular. Indeed the very life of theology itself depends upon this extension to the creative centres of contemporary culture, with a response to the fully historical situation. Furthermore, theology requires to be done by laymen, contributing to it in their capacity as expert witnesses. The experience of adult members of the Church working in specific situations needs to be seen as the raw material of creative theology, and Christian and non-Christian experience will be at once equally valid and applicable. As an indication of the sort of raw material I mean and to illustrate the sort of direction and way in which I think theology should extend, I should like to make these few inroads into the idea of a theology of education. I feel that our thinking about the nature of a Christian education has not sufficiently progressed simply because we have not yet developed such a discipline.

¹A paper given to the London Circle of the Newman Association.