

it never occurs to Robinson to ask why they are then reading theology.

I fear that we have to conclude that Robinson's "personal statement" is indeed not an hypothesis that stands any chance of being confirmed by evidence; it is a statement only of a dogged prejudice against allowing the rational mind to make its own legitimate contribution to the development of religious life.

This means that OV and LQ achieve much less than we might have hoped. The evidence in LQ is presented more fully than in OV, so that we can begin to grasp the individuality of the 12 people concerned, and this is fascinating, but only serves to confirm the improbability that any significant pattern will emerge from any merely empirical inquiry into religious experience. In OV most of the evidence is too fragmentary to provide more than periodic amusement. I suppose it does emerge with sufficient cogency that some people do have peculiar experiences in very ordinary circumstances, which sometimes lead to interesting consequences in their lives. But then we probably knew that already.

2 See, for instance, the comments of Wolfgang Trilling in his commentary on St Matthew (Burns & Oates, 1969, vol. II p. 84).

3 Cf C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, *Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (London, 1951).

## On Teaching The Catholic Faith In School

Emma Shackle

Five years ago, (February 1973) I wrote an article for this journal entitled 'On Teaching Religion in School' in which I argued for a style of teaching religion in Catholic schools which had greater respect for the child's own understanding of his religious identity. The fact that the majority of children in Catholic schools enter them with a Catholic label tied, as it were, round their necks, does tend to make those professionally concerned with the future of the Catholic faith in this country forget that, while for some children this label may be a pathway to great joy, for others it may be an albatross.

In the same article I pointed to a dilemma which lies at the heart of religious education in schools. This analysis still seems valid. It runs as follows:

- 1 Religious education (knowledge of religious reality) is usually acquired through participation in the life of a religious group.
- 2 Participant education in religion (i.e. taking part in prayers, religious rites etc.) *in a classroom context* is indoctrinatory where there is no personal commitment within the tradition that is inculcated.
- 3 The problem of identity is a paramount of adolescence. The adolescent experiments with a variety of identities and this process of experimentation is necessary if he is to achieve maturity.
- 4 It follows that the majority (or at least some proportion) of adolescent students will be subject to indoctrination in the negative sense if the aim of the teacher is 'to teach the Catholic faith'.
- 5 *But* participant education in religion is a condition of acquiring genuine religious knowledge.
- 6 Hence *either* the teacher teaches religion adequately and indoctrinates (in the bad sense of that word) some of his pupils *or* he teaches religion inadequately and does not indoctrinate.

The way of by-passing the dilemma that I suggested in February 1973 was that the teacher should have the minimum goal of helping the student achieve some understanding of religion and the maximum goal (for those pupils who wish it) of helping them to become religious themselves. My emphasis then was on the variety of ways in which the minimum goal could be achieved. The time now seems ripe for considering in more detail how the Catholic faith can be taught in such a way that the child is not harmed or scandalised. Jesus did warn us that: '... anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone round his neck!' (Matt. 18:6)

The first question to ask is whether 'passing on the faith' can be done in a school context. In a country where the bishops continue to express their support for the costly business of providing Catholic schools to educate a proportion of Catholic children between the ages of 5 and 18 we must hope (against a great deal of evidence from investigations by social scientists) that something good is, or could be, achieved.

Next we should consider the question 'Who cares most about schools?' We can also ask 'Who suffers most in the context of a bad school and who benefits most in the context of a good school?' The answer to the first question is, I would argue, not bishops, or teachers (even good teachers) but parents. The answer to the second question is, undoubtedly, the children. Which of us

does not still remember with violent negative emotion some incident from our own schooldays? Perhaps we also have some happy memories. Many teachers are dominated at least for part of their teaching career by the image of the child each used to be.

Such obsessions may account for some of the mythology of the profession. Teachers are usually seen as heroes who bring life and light to children from deprived homes. Alternatively parents exemplify bourgeois restrictive social attitudes from which children need to be liberated. Since a great deal of educational research makes it grimly clear that the best school cannot be effective educationally in the absence of parental support, it does seem that we are in need of a new mythology about parents.

In the context of Catholic schools a new mythology might begin from the Documents of Vatican II. The old authoritarian attitudes of the Church set out in Canon 1374 in the Code of Canon Law of 1917 and criticised by Rene Voetzi in an article in the *World Education Year Book* of 1966 are superseded by declarations on parental rights that would warm the cockles of his heart. 'Since parents have conferred life on their children they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.' (*Documents of Vatican II* Abbott ed. Geoffrey Chapman p. 641). The schoolteacher is there to assist the parents not to take over their job. 'Beautiful, therefore, and truly solemn is the vocation of those who assist parents in fulfilling their task, and who represent human society as well, by undertaking the role of school teacher'. (Op. cit. p. 643). The partnership between family and school is universalised and applied to State schools: '... the Church gives high praise to those civil authorities and civil societies that show regard for the pluralistic character of modern society, and take into account the right of religious liberty, by helping families in such a way that in all schools the education of their children can be carried out according to the moral and religious convictions of each family.' (Op. cit. p. 645).

The idea that the school is there to assist parents would be news, possibly good news, to many Catholics who have found it difficult to set up a PTA or get a parent on to the governing body of their child's school. The burgeoning PTA movement might well be interested to know that the Roman Catholic Church is so very clearly in sympathy with what they stand for viz. increased parental participation and power in schools.

We can return now to where we began, to the fact that most Catholic schools only admit children with Catholic labels, i.e. children who have been baptized in the Catholic Church. Why do children have this label? The answer is that the parents have had the child baptized. Now this fact does not imply, as the Vatican docu-

ment conveniently makes it imply, that both parents are themselves baptized Catholics. It does usually imply that one of them is. It is important to remember that in some parts of the country it is not the rule but the exception for a Roman Catholic to marry another Roman Catholic.

The decision of the parents to send a child to a Catholic school may be made for many reasons but it does imply a relatively positive attitude to the idea of having him/her 'brought up as a Catholic'. But here we have a possibility of divergence. The parents' idea of what is involved or important in bringing up their child as a Catholic may bear very little relation to the ideas held by the school.

The parent who is sad that the catechism which he found so helpful is now supposed to be obsolete, is one example. Or, there is the earnest convert, like the father of Nanda, in Antonia White's classic novel *Frost in May*, who does not appreciate how his sensitive daughter will react to the ghetto-like world of religious intensity she is exposed to at the Convent of the Five Wounds. There is also the foreign Catholic who is exposing his or her child to a different cultural tradition. The Catholic in a mixed or two-church marriage may have to reassure his or her partner that the child will not be unduly influenced in the direction of a religious vocation, or made to support the IRA, and deal with whatever fears, rational or irrational, may lurk in the recesses of the mind of the spouse. It is worth noting here without comment a quotation from a recent CTS pamphlet on 'Mixed Marriages between Christians' by John Coventry: 'Pope Paul's Letter on mixed marriages of 1970 emphasises that both husband and wife are bound by the responsibility of the children's religious upbringing. The marriage has already to some extent failed, if one partner insists on taking over, or if one partner refuses to be involved' (p. 8).

Now could the teaching of Vatican II about the responsibility of parents be put into practice? Certainly every school should have an active PTA and parent representation on the governing body. Beyond this there is a need for demythologization of the parent-teacher relationship and some understanding about power-sharing. The great strength of parents is that they understand in some ways better than anyone else the uniqueness of each of their children. Teachers, on the other hand, have a professional training and expertise and aim to do their best by all the children not just by little Johnny. Teachers tend to fear parent-power without realising that it is a fact of life whether organised or unorganised. If parents are not on the side of the school, little can be achieved. If they are it is probably safer that they should be organised. Somehow, somewhere, a time and place must be found where parents can talk to each other as well as to teachers. They must feel

free to express religious doubt as well as religious conviction.

So far I have concentrated largely on parents and teachers. We must not forget the children. Children do differ very much from each other but there are recognizable ways in which this occurs. My research on Jung's psychological types (M. Phil. London 1976) indicates that each of his types has a different entree into religion: very crudely it could be said that the intuitive has a yen for mysticism, the sensation type like ritual, thinking types like catechism, feeling types like value-systems. If there are varieties of children it follows that there should be varieties of catechesis: no system should be so rigid as not to allow children to follow their own bent.

One important implication for catechetics of the work of the Religious Experience Research Unit (Manchester College, Oxford) is, to put it briefly, that St Thomas Aquinas is not the only four-year-old who has ever wondered about God. The childhood experiences and insights reported by the RERU seem to be graces that help the child, if he or she is faithful to them, towards an understanding of vocation. Work of such delicacy as helping parents prepare their children for the sacraments should be the preserve of the highly-trained and highly-gifted.

Finally, I should like to end with a warning from the Jesuit psychologist Andre Godin of *Lumen Vitae* about what he calls cheap christianity. An example of this is seeing religion as a high-class insurance policy. If you go to Mass and the sacraments nothing dreadful will happen to you. We are conditioned psychologically to manufacture the God we want and all catechesis has to insist on the difference between this idol and the living God.

## Christians or Capitalists ?

Lewis Smith

I had better start by declaring an interest: Cosmas Desmond (hereinafter CD) is a friend from South African days, and it is in his flat that I write this review of his book.<sup>1</sup> Readers will be able to allow for any possible loss of objectivity; in another way the location is a positive advantage since CD's flat is a centre of South African contacts and involvement. This is directly relevant to the work done in the book, since it is self-confessedly a committed

<sup>1</sup> *Christian or Capitalists? Christianity and Politics in South Africa* by Cosmas Desmond. The Bowerdean Press, London, 1978. pp. 160. Hardback £7.00, Softback £3.90.