

# TO LOVE WITH ALL THE MIND

By JOHN McHUGH

*The lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts (Mal 2, 7).*

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me (Hos 4, 6).*

IT IS A commonplace to say that for over one hundred years the english clergy, with a few notable exceptions (mostly in the larger religious orders), have not been distinguished by their enthusiasm for intellectual pursuits; and the few exceptions, especially among the secular clergy, would be the first to agree. This statement is not meant as a condemnation,<sup>1</sup> but as a purely factual observation of what has been; and if it is taken as such, and not as a value-judgment, it may provide a useful starting point for reflections about the present and the future. For to understand the present, we must first understand the past; and before making any adverse judgment we need to be in possession of all the facts, so as to grasp the whole picture: *Tout savoir c'est tout comprendre; tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.*

It is clearly impossible to enter here into a detailed discussion of why things have been so, but it is only fair to the reader to set down the presuppositions on which this article is based, and which are here taken for granted. First, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the english bishops were faced with a pastoral problem of appalling magnitude. They were desperately short of priests to administer to the rapidly growing working-class population, mostly irish immigrants and their families; and the priests themselves were stretched to breaking-point in their quite heroic endeavours to minister to the poor.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, it is not surprising that in such a climate the irish poor, seeing in Cardinal Manning their great defender against the older, English-Catholic Establishment, should also embrace his ultramontane views against the older, native, english tradition of

<sup>1</sup> Cf Mt 7, 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> For a balanced treatment of the historical situation, and the importance of Cardinal Manning as an advocate of social reform, cf J. D. Holmes, *More Roman than Rome* (London/Shepherdstown, 1978), pp 155-97.

Cisalpinism.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, it was not until 1908, the year after the Encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis*,<sup>4</sup> that England was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and brought under normal Canon Law.<sup>5</sup> This in itself probably had little immediate effect on parochial life, but in 1915, a new Roman Congregation was established for seminaries and universities.<sup>6</sup> By this act the Holy See took more direct control over seminaries than had been the case before; at the Council of Trent, it will be remembered, the seminary was envisaged as an essentially diocesan institution, subject only to the local bishop.<sup>7</sup> The inevitable consequence of this change was the enforcement of ultramontane theology in seminaries. Amid the heat of the Modernist controversy, English Cisalpinism of the type defended by John Lingard was regarded (most unjustly) as an out-of-date, pre-1870 variation of Gallicanism.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the degrees required for teaching theology in a seminary were mostly obtained in Rome was a guarantee that all seminary professors would in practice be ultramontanes.<sup>9</sup> This much Church history may be taken as read.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Holmes, *loc. cit.*, pp 89-90. By 'Cisalpinism' I mean an attitude of mind which rejects both Ultramontanist (the idea that Catholics should be guided by Rome on every issue even remotely connected with religion) and Gallicanism (the idea that even on matters of faith and morals the Roman See is not an ultimate court of appeal from a local bishop or hierarchy). The English Cisalpines of the nineteenth century were very conscious of their descent from those who had laid down their lives for the primacy of the Roman See and for the doctrines of the Council of Trent; they were equally opposed to the notion that the Pope or the Roman Curia had any authority on matters not connected with faith or morals (e.g. on gothic or roman vestments). The distinction between the spiritual and temporal authority of the Papacy had sunk deep into the consciousness of English Recusants as a result of the excommunication of Elizabeth I in 1570. They were prepared to die for their faith, but not for papal politics. It is in these broad senses that ultramontanist, gallicanism and cisalpinism are used in this article.

<sup>4</sup> *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 40 (1907). Cf also *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (NCE), vol 10, p 1048.

<sup>5</sup> Cf E. E. Reynolds, *The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales* (London, 1973), p 358.

<sup>6</sup> In 1908, St Pius X revised the whole schema of Roman Congregations, but it was seven years before that for seminaries and universities was established by Benedict XV. Cf NCE, vol 13, p 72.

<sup>7</sup> Cf J. A. O'Donohoe, 'Seminary', in NCE, vol 13, pp 72-73.

<sup>8</sup> Cf M. Haile and E. Binney, *Life and Letters of John Lingard* (London, 1911); also note 3, *supra*.

<sup>9</sup> I.e. their interpretation of the faith and morals of the Church would be what they had learnt in Rome, namely, the theology of the 'roman school', whereas earlier generations had appealed most of all to the unbroken witness of their own local church during the years of its communion with Rome. This appeal to the home-grown witness of the English Church is very evident in the teaching of nineteenth-century seminary lecturers and writers such as Lingard, but received much less emphasis in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet it is surely just as important to show that the roman communion is truly catholic as to show that the catholic communion must in practice be roman.

Yet that is not to say that the seminaries of those days provided a thoroughly bad education. There is another factor which must be taken into account in the assessment of clerical education during the twentieth century in England. Until the Parliamentary Education Act of 1944, it was extraordinarily difficult for the child of working-class parents to go to a grammar school. True, there were a handful of scholarships for the most brilliant, especially after 1919; but all too often the cost of books and uniforms put such secondary education beyond the reach of the really poor and the unemployed; and many families could not afford to lose the wages of the young children anyway. Indeed, even after the implementation of the 1944 Act, university education remained for the majority unthinkable, until the Robbins Report was adopted by Parliament in the 'sixties. Thus for the first half of this century, the Junior Seminaries which supplied the bulk of the secular clergy offered an education infinitely superior to anything available elsewhere to the children of working-class parents; and the courses in Philosophy and Theology provided future priests with higher education that could not even have been dreamt of in any other circumstances.

All this came to an end in the early 'sixties. For the first time since, shall we say, the sixth century, a Catholic boy from a family of modest means was no longer faced with a choice between two 'package deals': either to be a priest and to receive the best education available to him in practice, or not to be a priest and to start work in his early 'teens, at anything from shop-keeping to coal-mining. Now at last there was a third possibility open, to go to a university at the expense of the Local Education Authority, and there to develop his intellectual capabilities to the full. The era that stretched from the Venerable Bede, through St Thomas Becket († 1170), St John Fisher († 1535) and Richard Challoner († 1781),<sup>10</sup> to our own day was closed; the years of the 'brain-drain into the Church' were over.

It was, if not coincidental, at least providential that the Second Vatican Council took place in the same years as the first implementation of the Robbins Report. In fact, the same social factors were almost certainly at work in both cases. It is only against this background that one can begin to evaluate fairly the changes in the academic formation of priests which have been introduced since

<sup>10</sup> Richard Challoner (1691-1781) Vicar Apostolic in England from 1758, is best known as author of *The Garden of the Soul*, and reviser of the Douai-Rheims version of the Bible. Cf NCE, vol 3, pp 437-38.

the close of the Council. All the english seminaries now have some form of contact with a state university. It is obviously more useful, however, to avoid generalizations, and to give some account from personal experience of how the academic side of priestly training may be carried on within the framework of attendance at a Department of Theology in an english secular university. The rest of this article is therefore concerned with only one seminary and one university.

It was in 1968, the fourth centenary of William (later Cardinal) Allen's departure from Oxford,<sup>11</sup> that Ushaw College, a seminary educating priests for dioceses in northern England,<sup>12</sup> was recognized as a Licensed Hall of Residence in the University of Durham.<sup>13</sup> This gave the College the right to send students to the University while continuing their priestly training at Ushaw. The normal pattern is that students with the necessary qualifications read for degrees (usually in Theology) during the third, fourth and fifth years of their six-year course. For the first two years they follow an introductory course at Ushaw, which includes Ecclesiology, Moral and Spiritual Theology, Liturgy and so on.

Let us begin (in good thomistic fashion) by setting out the objections to such a scheme. Those brought up in a world where the object of Catholic theology was to 'defend' and to 'preserve' the integrity of the faith will perhaps find it strange, if not downright undesirable, that forty per cent of Ushaw students should spend three of their six years learning theology from non-Catholics in a secular university. Priests who for a life-time have been accustomed to the *Index librorum prohibitorum* find the shelves of the newly-ordained fairly stocked with 'Protestant theology'; some are understandably disquieted, and ask whether the heirs of Cardinal Allen have exchanged their birth-right, the Catholic Faith, for a degree at a 'Protestant' University.

*Sed contra*: let us continue with St Thomas by citing the argument from authority. The simplest and most direct way of setting such fears at rest is to point to the Holy See's Ecumenical Directory.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf *Letters and Memorials of William Cardinal Allen*, ed T. F. Knox (London, 1882), p 22. He is given a short notice in NCE, vol 1, p 324.

<sup>12</sup> Cf David Milburn, *A History of Ushaw College* (Ushaw College, Durham, 1964).

<sup>13</sup> Durham University received its Royal Charter in 1832.

<sup>14</sup> Part II, *Spiritus Domini*, 16 April 1970: 'Ecumenism in Higher Education', in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed A. Flannery (Dublin/New York, 1975), pp 515ff.

Whatever may have been true in the past, Ushaw's affiliation to the University of Durham stands well within the provisos of today's Canon Law.<sup>15</sup> But this only raises the further question: why have the bishops in the North of England and the Holy See approved of the undertaking? In other words, what is the purpose of it all? To answer these questions (our *Responsio*), one must ask what is the purpose of studying theology.

In the not very distant past, many would have replied: 'To understand, explain, preserve and defend the Catholic Faith in all its integrity, as it was once delivered to the Apostles'. Side by side with this answer, we may consider the following words: 'This is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent'.<sup>16</sup> The former statement asserts that the function of theology is to study and to expound what is taught by the Church; and this is how the majority of us were trained. The latter statement will seem to many to be concerned not with theology (which is learned in libraries, studies and lecture-rooms), but with prayer (which is practised, principally, in church). For this reason, many think that the study of theology is less important than the practice of prayer; and, given the above definition, they are right.

But is the definition right? Is the function of theology simply to study and to expound what is taught by the Church? St Thomas Aquinas did not consider such a definition adequate. He is adamant that the subject-matter of theology is God, that the purpose of theology is to know God, and that the teachings of the Church are only the way in which man seeks to express his knowledge of God.<sup>17</sup> If we assume that St Thomas's definition is correct, then the study of theology is, like the practice of prayer, one way of knowing God. There are some truths we can learn only through the study of theology (for example, the content of revelation), others which can be learnt only through the practice of prayer (for example, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church). Prayer and theology are thus complementary activities, and not always easy to distinguish, for their common function is to lead men to the knowledge, and thereby to the love, of God.

But if that is so, it might seem absurd to expose young and immature students for three years to the full impact of non-Catholic theology, when it would be so much easier to keep them in a seminary where the teaching and the prayer-life would dovetail perfectly.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 530-31.

<sup>16</sup> Jn. 17, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Summa Theologica*, 1, q. 1, a. 7; 2-2ae, q. 1, a. 2.

What has a secular university to offer that a seminary could not provide?

Obviously, a level of scholarship and a range of courses that will stretch the most gifted student to the full, one that will be recognized by the world at large, and which will give the student himself a certain confidence that the Church has not deprived him of the best education the country can offer. All these are not sufficient reasons for reading theology at a secular university as part of the preparation for the priesthood, for none of them is (if the jargon may be pardoned) a 'spiritual' reason. But they are useful bonuses if sound and substantial reasons for the scheme can be found elsewhere.

*Lumen Gentium cum sit Christus*:<sup>18</sup> if Christ is the Light of the Nations, if the Church exists for a mission to the world, then future priests must be formed with a wholly missionary outlook. And in one's own country, as in the world, the greatest single obstacle to the spread of the Gospel is that Christians speak with stridently dissonant voices. The first step towards the conversion of England must consist in a serious and irrevocable commitment on all sides to ecumenism, whatever its attendant frustrations and failures.

This demands, in the first place, that Catholics genuinely understand what other Christian Churches profess and practise. Caricatures of their beliefs have been bandied about in our own communion just as extensively as caricatures of our beliefs have been accepted in theirs. The only way to remedy this disease is to ensure that in future the ministers of all Churches are truly conversant with the faith and practice of other communions. The theology of Luther and Calvin, properly understood, will illustrate the grandeur of the spirituality that is expressed in the lines

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy Cross I cling.

Other examples are easy to find. Even today, how many Catholics are familiar with the two splendid hymns, 'Her virgin eyes saw God Incarnate born', and 'Virgin-born, we bow before thee', both of them written by anglican bishops? And to ignore the work of John and Charles Wesley is to take no notice of two men whom the Catholic Church would have been proud to call its own.

This kind of easy familiarity with other christian traditions cannot be acquired simply by reading books about them. It is essential

<sup>18</sup> The opening clause of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church — *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

to know Christians whose lives are guided by principles somewhat different from our own, and to be at ease with them in discussing practical questions about prayer, the work of the ministry and so on. Such familiarity cannot be gained by occasional contacts, but only by regular and even daily meetings. Once that is admitted, it is self-evident that the best age to start is in early youth, when the mind is still flexible enough to accept new ideas and perspectives without a struggle. And it is equally evident that the most favourable environment is in a university, where the sole aim is to present accurately and fairly the doctrines of the various Churches. Here England has a singular advantage over Germany or France, with their avowedly Protestant or Catholic Faculties of Theology. But this advantage carries with it a most serious obligation. For if we are ever to see christian reunion in our own country, 'that the world may believe', then we ourselves as Catholics must be fully involved in preparing the way. An inter-confessional Department of Theology without Roman Catholic participation is, quite simply, *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

The purpose of studying theology is to know God, by learning about the various ways in which the Church and the great classical theologians have formulated man's knowledge about him. But if, as Catholic tradition stresses, all our formulations are inadequate to the mystery, so that we always see through a glass darkly, then the various formulas of faith each express but one facet of the mystery; and each christian tradition highlights one aspect of his Being. Thus, by studying the formulation of all Christian Churches, and by reading the works of very different theologians, a man is brought to a fuller knowledge of God. We believe that the most satisfactory harmonization of all the seemingly contradictory doctrines is to be found today in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. But with St Paul, we must add 'Not that I am already perfect';<sup>19</sup> the Catholic Church too is still *in statu viatoris*, reaching out into the future to a more perfect grasp of the mystery, continually being led by the Holy Spirit towards the fulness of truth.

And it is in this that the value of the university course at Durham consists: not in the acquisition of a B.A. degree, nor in the providing of a course which stretches the most able students to the limit of their abilities. These are a bonus, but of themselves they would not necessarily make ordinands better equipped for a pastoral ministry;

<sup>19</sup> Phil 3, 12.

if they were the only or the principal advantages, it could rightly be objected that we were training people for an academic life, not for a pastoral ministry outside the academic world. But if the mission of the Church, and therefore of the pastoral priest, is 'that the world may believe', then it is here and now imperative that all Churches do everything within their power to hasten the day of christian reunion. For if as priests we regard our life's work as the ministry of reconciliation,<sup>20</sup> then the reconciliation must first begin among Christians, before we can expect the world to listen to our message of peace. Above all, if we are indeed to be ministers of reconciliation, then we, the ministers of various communions, must first understand and be reconciled with one another. So much for the 'practical', external, pastoral advantage of reading theology in an inter-confessional Department of Theology.

But there is also a 'spiritual', internal advantage to be gained by the very fact of being stretched to the limit of one's intellectual abilities. For if all theology is seen as teaching about God, the more profound a man's knowledge of theology, the more he will know about God. The two Old Testament texts placed at the beginning of this article are even more applicable to the priests of the New Covenant than to the Levitical priests of the Old. For the plain fact is that the overwhelming majority of Christians, once their schooldays are over, rely almost entirely on their clergy for instruction in the faith, and for their inspiration to live it. The Sunday sermon is at the very heart of the priest's ministry, just as important as the administration of the sacraments. Men seek instruction from his mouth, look up to him as the messenger of the Lord of hosts. 'This is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent'. For a priest to fail or to grow tepid in this ministry of preaching is to invite the condemnation pronounced by Hosea: 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me'.

Preaching the word is a daunting responsibility, possible only by grace. But as Catholics we believe not only that God will supply in abundance the actual graces demanded for this particular sermon, to this congregation, if only we ask him humbly, sincerely and perseveringly. We believe also that by the Sacrament of Holy Order a person is endowed with an indelible character conferring for ever

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<sup>20</sup> Cf 2 Cor 5, 16-21.



a 'grace of state', by which the Holy Spirit strengthens his weakness to make him a worthy minister of the New Covenant.<sup>21</sup> But even Timothy had to be gently admonished to fan into flame once more that gift of God which he had received through the laying-on of hands.<sup>22</sup> And in this context we may see why St Matthew has departed from both the hebrew and the septuagint text of Deuteronomy, glossing the hebrew words 'heart' and 'soul' by adding 'and with all thy mind'.<sup>23</sup> For us westerns today, as in Matthew's day, the words 'heart and soul' might imply that all that is required is an affective love of God. For the Israelites, they meant much more; and St Thomas is surely right to ask whether it was a good idea to add '*with all thy mind*, etc.'. His answer is that there are three springs of human action, the first of which is the intellect, signified by 'mind'.<sup>24</sup> And that is why the priest can never be justified in abandoning the study of theology, the pursuit of the knowledge of God. For we cannot love what we do not know; and knowledge is the very starting-point of love. That is what is meant when we read, in the first and greatest of the commandments: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy mind*'.

<sup>21</sup> Council of Trent, Session XXII, ch 4 and Canon 4. Cf Denzinger-Schönmetzer, 1767, 1774; cf also 2 Cor 3, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Cf 2 Tim 1, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Cf Deut 6, 4; Mt 22, 37; Mk 12, 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Loc cit.* 2-2ae, q. 44, a. 5.