

2) interpretare la vita dell'uomo come pellegrinaggio verso Dio, 3) formare delle comunità sulla via, 4) proclamare il Vangelo in pubblico, 5) essere instancabili nell'annuncio della buona novella, 6) sottolineare la stabilità e la normatività di questo annuncio da parte della Chiesa, 7) far capire il carattere misterioso della Fede, 8) presentare l'atto della Fede come possibilità ultima della libertà umana, 9) mostrare che la penitenza è l'altra parte della Fede, 10) avere l'adorazione come fine di tutta la pastorale. Così, l'attualità di Matthias Joseph Scheeben anche per l'opera pastorale nel nostro tempo rimane indiscutibile, perché egli non si è lasciato trascinare dal razionalismo della sua epoca, ma ha utilizzato i principi della sua dogmatica per costruire una pastorale adatta ai bisogni dell'uomo di sempre: « Per Scheeben, la pastorale era il caso concreto della dogmatica ».

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCHEEBEN FOR CATECHETICS

While scientific theology was his field of teaching and writing and he did not do *ex professo* catechetical works, Matthias Joseph Scheeben was always concerned about the impact of theology upon the laity, and indeed has been called rightly the pioneer of theology for the laity. His works in this field are directly significant for catechetics and remain to this day a fruitful resource for parish catechetical teachers⁽¹⁾. Nevertheless, his approach to theology as such has its own deep and abiding significance for the field of catechetical teaching. This aspect of Scheeben's theologizing will be studied here, following the lead of Eschweiler's work on *The Two Ways of Recent Theology*⁽²⁾. For in his *Dogmatik*, his treatise on scientific theology which came forth from his teaching of future priests, Scheeben manifests a deep conviction that theology in itself is of supreme importance for the truest and highest formation of mind and heart⁽³⁾. This bears directly upon the catechetical apostolate, for it is chiefly in the hands of the bishops and priests, who lead and guide all catechetical teaching and all religious and lay catechists in the effort to help baptized Christians to « deepen their conversion »⁽⁴⁾.

(1) *Die Herrlichkeiten der göttlichen Gnade* (1863) and the *Mysterien des Christentums* (1865) were directed to lay audiences. In them, as C.M. AHERNE notes in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York 1967), Vol. 12, p. 1122, « Scheeben anticipated by 100 years the concept of theology for laity ».

(2) Cf. KARL ESCHWEILER, *Die Zwei Wege der Neueren Theologie: Georg Hermes, Matth. Jos. Scheeben* (Augsburg: Verlag Benno Filser, 1926).

(3) Cf. AHERNE, *loc. cit.*

(4) The purpose of catechetical teaching stated in the *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 22.

The Ministry of the Word

The bearing of Scheeben's way of theologizing upon the field of catechetics can perhaps best be clarified by reflecting on the forms of the ministry of the Word in the official teaching of the Church. « The ministry of the Word takes many forms. ... There is the form called evangelization. ... Then there is the catechetical form ... and then the liturgical form » (5). The first form arouses the beginnings of faith in the Word of God. The second form deepens this faith in each personality « through the light of instruction », a significant phrase cited by the *General Catechetical Directory* from the Vatican II document on the Bishops (6). The third form, that of the liturgy, takes place « within the setting of a liturgical celebration, especially that of the Eucharist, e.g., the homily » (7).

The essential point regarding these forms is the fact each contains verbal communication of the very Word of God; each is a form of instruction in human words which teaches the Word of God. The concept of a Word of God, coming to persons from God through these ministries of teaching and instruction, « accepted for what it really is, God's message and not some human thinking » (1 Thess 2:13), is essential with respect to Scheeben and the fourth form of this ministry. « Finally », the Directory concludes, « there is the theological form, that is, the systematic treatment and the scientific investigation of the truths of faith. ... It is important to keep these forms distinct, since they are governed by their own laws. Nevertheless, in the concrete reality of the pastoral ministry, they are closely bound together » (8).

This specifies the catechetical significance of Scheeben's way of theologizing, for by means of it he keeps all four forms of the ministry of the Word « closely bound together »: all four are bound into a unity, which is the very unity of the Catholic Church, because they teach and instruct on the basis of a deposit of divine revelation completed and concluded with Jesus' teaching of his Apostles, handing it on always and everywhere in the same meaning which it had for the Apostles (9). Clearly

(5) *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 17.

(6) Cf. *Christus Dominus*, no. 14: « Bishops should be especially concerned about catechetical instruction. Its function is to develop in men a living, explicit and active faith, enlightened by doctrine ». This disavows the « experience approach » in catechetics.

(7) Here the *General Catechetical Directory* cites Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum concilium* Nos. 33 and 52; No. 33 points out that « the sacred liturgy ... contains much instruction for the faithful ». The operating word is « instruction ».

(8) *General Catechetical Directory*, No. 17.

(9) For this « Vincentian Canon », cf. D-S 3043 and 3462.

it is possible to theologize in a way which introduces a cleavage between the scientific form of the ministry of the Word and the instruction given in the other forms. This is especially devastating for catechesis, for it threatens to turn it into a different kind of religious education. This would have ominous implications for every aspect of the concrete reality of the pastoral ministry. It is here that Eschweiler's study of the contrast between Hermes and Scheeben helps to clarify Scheeben's abiding catechetical significance.

Hermes' Way in Theology

Karl Eschweiler devotes his second chapter to « George Hermes: The Theology of Critical Reason » (10). The background is the alienation, in the 16th and 17th centuries, from Aristotle's *Physics* with its *formae substantiales* and *qualitates occultae*. Catholic theologians of the 18th century, led by Benedict Stattler, S.J. (1728-1797), « broke away from the older metaphysics on the occasion of this new natural science » (11). This led directly to Hermes, who replaced the heritage of Christian metaphysics with the new kind of philosophy contained in the work of Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant and Hegel. For Hermes, theology is entirely concerned with the preambles of faith in the minds of persons imbued with this new philosophy rather than with the faith itself. « A new approach in Catholic theology proceeding apart from the faith had become practically self-evident » (12). It is clear that Hermes felt a change in the cultural and intellectual milieu which made imperative his way of doing theology. Fundamental in this change was Kant's « Copernican Revolution » in philosophy, by which « men of the modern age depart from and proceed within the subjective world of the knowing subject » (13). This brought Hermes to his « theological system of critical reason » (14). It centers upon the « human interest » of the thinking subject, an interest which is culturally produced and conditioned. « As a whole », Eschweiler concludes, comma, « Hermes » system exhibits a new and radical psychologism without counterpart in the past » (15).

(10) ESCHWEILER, *op. cit.*, C. II, « Georges Hermes: Die Theologie der kritischen Vernunft », pp. 81-130.

(11) *Ibid.*, p. 82.

(12) *Ibid.*, p. 84.

(13) *Ibid.*, p. 85.

(14) *Ibid.*, p. 86.

(15) *Ibid.*, p. 87.

In the judgment of the Supreme Magisterium this metaphysics which sees not the truth of reality but only the logical coherence of the system within the thinker's mind has devastating consequences for *doctrina sacra* (16). It represents « a profanation of the teaching office » of the Church, comma: « one which adulterates the Sacred Deposit of the Faith » (17). An attitude pervades Hermes' work which is alienated from and hostile to the heritage of teaching elaborated in the thousand years from the Fathers to the dawn of the Modern Age. His work, therefore, cannot but overturn the entire doctrine of the faith, from its roots in Scripture and its Rule in the catechumenate, across all the mysteries to the very concept of God. « It teaches errors regarding God's essence, holiness, justice and liberty, and about his purpose and mode in creating and redeeming mankind » (18).

It is clear that catechetical teaching will be affected in its very foundations and essential content by this way in theology. It is not too much to say that Hermes' work is a subjective construct more truly called a « philosophy of religion » than « Sacred Theology ». It has lost its contact with the very Articles of Faith which come to the thinker from beyond himself, just as they do in the case of catechumens. These Articles of Faith are really absent from this way of theologizing, for they are neither the first principles of its departure nor the light under which its discourse proceeds (19). It would be difficult to exaggerate the contrast between this way of theologizing and that of Scheeben.

Scheeben's Way in Theology

Eschweiler denotes this way with great accuracy in the title of his third chapter: « Matthias Jos. Scheeben: Theology out of the Faith » (20). The definite article is fundamentally important: it indicates the definite and particular faith formulated by the authority of the teaching Church in the language of human discourse. Scheeben theologizes out of the Faith,

(16) Cf. D-S 2738-2740, excerpts from *Dum acerbissimas* (Sept. 20, 1835).

(17) D-S 2738.

(18) D-S 2739.

(19) Cf. St. THOMAS AQUINAS, *De veritate* q. 14, art. 9, ad 3^m. For the manner in which the Articles of Faith function as first principles in authentic Sacred Theology, cf. CORNELIO FABRO, *L'avventura della teologia progressista* (Milano: Rusconi, 1974), pp. 97-128.

(20) ESCHWEILER, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-183: « Matthias Jos. Scheeben: Die Theologie aus dem Glauben ». For a comprehensive study of Scheeben's approach, cf. EUGEN PAUL, *Denkweg und Denkform der Theologie von Matthias Joseph Scheeben* (München: Max Hueber Verlag, 1970).

that Faith which the catechetical order of teaching explains in the catechumenate and applies to the *metanoia* of the catechumens as their way of living. This establishes at one stroke the significance of Scheeben for catechetics: his will be a theology which is an authentic form of the ministry of the Word, one which provides a foundation of scientific and intellectual support for the men of the cloth who are responsible for the other three forms, evangelization, catechesis and the liturgy.

For this fundamental dimension regarding Scheeben's work, one must turn to his *Dogmatik*, the systematic theological treatise which came forth from his lifetime of teaching future priests. Here space permits only a brief sketch of his approach (21). « We shall begin », Scheeben writes, « by treating ... the sources of theological knowledge, the rule and motive of Faith, *how* we are to believe and *why* we should believe it » (22). This states the material and formal object of catechetical teaching. It is significant that Scheeben opens his *Dogmatik* with Part One, « The objective principles of theological knowledge » (23). These objective principles are the content of the revelation which comes to human persons from the transcendent Supreme Being, therefore from outside the human self: hence Scheeben's point of departure is these « objective principles » (24). This is the parting of the ways between Hermes and Scheeben: the former departs from within the psychologism of the human self, granting Kant's Copernican Revolution in metaphysics; the latter is a clear disavowal of the Kantian approach of Modern Philosophy (25).

From this point of departure Scheeben develops the initial part of his *Dogmatik*, an abidingly useful exposition of the nature and trans-

(21) Here use is made of *A Manual of Catholic Theology based on Scheeben's « Dogmatik »* (London: Kegan Paul, 1890) Vols. I-II, done into English by Joseph Wilhelm and Thomas B. Scannell; in his Preface the Cardinal of Westminster calls « this English presentation of Scheeben's scientific *Dogmatik* a signal boon ... for the careful and conscientious study of Sacred Theology ».

(22) *Ibid.*, « Introduction », p. LII.

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 3.

(24) Revelation and Faith are correlatives. It is clear therefore that Scheeben recognizes the Articles of Faith as the first principles of his theological discourse.

(25) ESCHWEILER, *op. cit.*, p. 135, is quite explicit on Scheeben's way as the conscious rejection of the Kantian immanentism: « Scheeben entzieht das Glaubensproblem gleich beim Beginn seiner Untersuchung der blossen Bedeutungs — und Bewusstseinsphäre. Das Glauben ist eine Wirkung zwischen intelligenten Existenzen ». This establishes the catechetics of the Apostles' Creed and the official catechisms, and eliminates the pantheistic and naturalistic religious education of the experience approach. The two ways in theology have indeed worked out into the two diametrically different approaches which have sundered and fragmented the field of catechetical teaching.

mission of divine revelation⁽²⁶⁾. He is lucidly clear and unambiguous on the fact that the subject-matter of supernatural revelation is constituted by the mysteries of Christianity. « The content of Supernatural Revelation is called Mystery, or mystery of God; that is, a truth hidden in God, but made known to man by a free communication. ... This Revelation is by word of mouth »⁽²⁷⁾. From this fundamental recognition that Revelation, the very Word of God, is transmitted by the words of human discourse and natural communication, Scheeben can proceed to the apostolate of the teaching Church: all four forms of the ministry of the Word manifest a harmonious unity which constitutes the very indefectibility of the Church. « The presence of mysteries in Christian revelation », Scheeben states forthrightly, « is essential to its sublime character. The principle of Revelation is God himself in his character of Father, sending his Son and, through him, the Holy Spirit into this world to announce "what the Son received from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from both" »⁽²⁸⁾. It is from this position that Scheeben develops his theme of « childlike Faith », so basic to the catechetical order of teaching: Faith depends upon receiving this objective Revelation from the Divine Persons as a little child accepts the teaching of his parents⁽²⁹⁾.

Scheeben turns to « The Transmission of Revelation » in the second chapter of his opening part of the *Dogmatik*⁽³⁰⁾. Again forthrightly and without a trace of ambiguity the Teaching Church enters in Scheeben's theologizing as essential to the plan of God. Since Revelation is intended to be the principle of Faith, Scheeben writes, leading to an infallible knowledge of revealed truth, « it follows that God should provide efficient means to enable mankind to acquire a complete, certain and uniform knowledge of revealed truth, and to secure to himself a uniform and universal worship founded on Faith. This exercise of God's *Ius Majestatis* over the mind of man is rightly insisted upon by the Vatican Council against the rationalistic tendencies of the day. Moreover, God could not cast upon the world the written document of his revealed Word, and leave it to an uncertain fate. Had he done so, the purposes of Revela-

⁽²⁶⁾ There is a significant similarity between Scheeben's way in theology and the contemporary way of Cardinal Ratzinger in catechetics; cf. « *Transmission de la foi et sources de la foi* », in AA.VV., *Transmettre la foi aujourd'hui* (Paris: le Centurion, 1983), pp. 39-61.

⁽²⁷⁾ SCHEEBEN, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁽²⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁽²⁹⁾ Cf. ESCHWEILER, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-163, for Scheeben's « *Kind-Vater Gleichnis* » and his treatment of « *Die Gotteskindschaft* » as the root and principle of theological knowledge. It goes without saying that this matter is fundamental for catechetics.

⁽³⁰⁾ SCHEEBEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-49.

tion would have been completely frustrated. The only efficient mode of transmitting Revelation with authority is that the Word of God, after having once been spoken, should be continually proposed to mankind by his authorized envoys, and promulgated in his name and power as the principle and rule of Faith. These envoys are called the Teaching Body; their functions are called the Apostolate »⁽³¹⁾.

Significance for Catechetics

This luminous passage will perhaps suffice to illustrate Scheeben's way in theology and its contrast with the other way. Scheeben proceeds on in rigorous logic to discuss « The Apostolic Deposit of Revelation » and « The Rule of Faith »⁽³²⁾. The catechetical bearing of this way in theology becomes quite explicit in Scheeben's concluding section on « The Chief Dogmatic Documents: Creeds and Decrees »⁽³³⁾. « The most important dogmatic documents », he writes, « are the Creeds, or Symbols of Faith, and the decrees of the Popes and of General and Particular Councils. We subjoin a short list of these in order to show the development of doctrine in the Church. The simplest and oldest creed, which is the foundation of all the others, is *The Apostles' Creed*. Its main lines certainly come from the Apostles »⁽³⁴⁾. With this, little remains to be said, for this is Scheeben's significance for catechetics stated by himself. This is the way in theology, the approach in theologizing, which establishes the credal foundation of the other three forms of ministry to God's Word, evangelization, catechesis and liturgy, upon their scientific footing. Catechetics, of course, is the teaching which explains this Creed and helps persons to apply it in their way of life.

This first part of Scheeben's *Dogmatik* is actually a course in fundamental catechetics, the kind of course which grounds a catechesis authentic in its witness to Jesus in his Lordship. It clarifies the nature and purpose of the Ordinary and Universal Magisterium and illuminates the correlative nature and purpose of the coming worldwide Uniform Catechism⁽³⁵⁾. When

⁽³¹⁾ SCHEEBEN, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁽³²⁾ Chapters III, IV and V, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-110.

⁽³³⁾ SCHEEBEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-110.

⁽³⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁽³⁵⁾ Cf. Vatican I, *Dei Filius*, c. 3; D-S 3011. Pope John Paul II in *Catechesi tradendae*, No. 52, stresses the same fact that the teaching office of the Church exists and functions in two forms, the Extraordinary and the Ordinary form; the latter is chiefly catechetical although also present and operative in evangelization and in the liturgy. It is well known that Pope John Paul II and the Synod of

candidates for the priesthood learn scientific theology in Scheeben's way they are indeed prepared to provide positive, active and indeed fearless leadership for the catechetical apostolate as priests and bishops.

The other way in theology likewise results in its own kind of *Fundamentalkatechetik*, one which has become increasingly visible in the aftermath of Vatican II⁽³⁶⁾. For Hermes' way in theology, to the continuing surprise of almost everyone in the Church, did not end with the doctrinal decisions of Vatican I regarding its German phase in Hermes and Günther. It went on to a European phase at the turn of the century, which likewise seemed to end with the doctrinal decisions and actions of Leo XIII and St. Pius X. The end of the phenomenon once again was only apparent, however, for it has risen to new life in an international third phase in the times after Vatican II. While these three phases naturally differ in modes of expression, they have an underlying metaphysical identity which the Supreme Magisterium has recognized by its program for the renewal of the natural metaphysics of mankind, with its rational support for the abiding and indeed eternal hermeneutic of the Word of God.

In this larger context and in view of the well-known contemporary catechetical aberrations which are resulting from the other way in theology Scheeben appears to have an abiding catechetical significance. The way of Hermes, Günther and their school, a way which continues in Loisy and Tyrrell and in the New Hermeneutic of the decades after Vatican II, generates a catechesis characterized by the real absence of the Deposit of Faith and Morals. A different kind of religious education results, based on subjective opinions which the experiencing subject takes from the ambient philosophy and cultural environment.

Scheeben's way in theology, on the other hand, proceeding within the Faith and its objective principles, supports the ongoing apostolate of the Catholic Church, the catechetical formation of souls for the Chris-

1985 have scheduled for 1990 the completion of the Uniform Catechism of the Catholic Church, already projected at Vatican I as the chief official instrument of the Ordinary and Universal Magisterium. This event will have a special significance for Scheeben's way in theology. ✓✓

⁽³⁶⁾ For an illustration, cf. HUBERT HALBFAS, *Theory of Catechetics* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), the translation of his *Fundamentalkatechetik* (Dusseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1968). Gabriel Moran, F.S.C., introduces the English edition with a rather enthusiastic Foreword, pp. 7-10, in which he praises Halbfas for «speaking with forceful candor on the failure of the churches to face up to the modern critiques of Christianity» (p. 7), and for pointing out that «educationally speaking one cannot begin with the assumption that the Bible is the word of God» (p. 10). Halbfas and Moran both illustrate the final catechetical outcome of Hermes' way in theology, the result of taking the self and its ambient culture as the point of departure and the criterion for developing its discourse.

tian way of life by means of the real presence of the Deposit of Faith and Morals in the catechisms and other instruments of the Ordinary and Universal Magisterium. It seems clear, therefore, that the crucial importance for catechetics of Scheeben's way in theology has been made increasingly visible by the events of the century since his time.

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