

Editorial

PASTORS AND TEACHERS

JUST a year ago, in an editorial entitled "The *Canadian Journal of Theology*: Retrospect and Prospect," we tried to state in a few hundred words some of the many things we had in mind in planning the early volumes of the *Journal*. Among other points, we noted that we intended to produce a journal of *theology*, which would both focus attention on the abiding truth of God's revelation and bring that truth to bear on the problems of the Church in the modern world. We disclaimed any thought of engaging in elaborate technical discussions of the history or the logic of theology, important as such discussions are, in the final analysis, for the integrity and clarity of Christian thinking and speaking. What we did want to do, we said, was to hold up the truth of God, interpreted and presented with all the resources at our disposal, as the standard of Christian understanding and Christian action. By this intention we stand.

It is one thing, however, to see a target, and quite another thing to hit it, and we are only too well aware of unfulfilled intentions and unsolved problems. More especially, as we begin our seventh volume, we are conscious of a partial failure, at least, to meet the felt needs of many parish priests and ministers. On this point, any lack of sensitivity in our own corporate conscience has been compensated for by the friendly frankness of a number of pastors. We candidly admit that we have failed to provide a steady supply of certain commodities which might reasonably have been expected from us and which, indeed, it has been our declared intention to offer. Of course, we cannot print what has not been written, and if our store of biblical expositions is often empty and our file of studies of particular pastoral problems almost non-existent, the explanation is simple: with certain notable exceptions, our Canadian biblical scholars have done little to help us bring contemporary biblical studies to the aid of the men who must preach God's Word in our pulpits week in and week out, while those very pastors who put such an unerring finger on our editorial weaknesses are strangely diffident when it comes to sharing their own experience and insights with our readers. But we do not want to excuse ourselves by pointing to the failures of others. However good the reasons may seem, we know that we have not yet achieved a great many things whose importance we acknowledge.

At the same time, perhaps we may be permitted to wonder out loud whether pastors always make full use of what we do manage to provide—

and whether, where they do not, one reason may not be a failure to appreciate one very important aspect of the pastoral office in the modern world.

His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles [Ephes. 4:11-14].

Please note: the writer does not say, "some pastors and some teachers," but rather, "some pastors and teachers." The teaching function, very grandly delineated, is put forward as an integral part of the work of the ordinary ministry of the Christian Church. Let us look at three ways in which this teaching function must be performed today.

(i) We all admit the fundamental importance of the Bible for preaching and teaching. We must recognize, however, that modern biblical criticism has set question-marks over many traditional interpretations of Scripture, and that recent discoveries of great significance have placed the New Testament in an altered perspective—even to the point of raising radical questions about the validity of the Christian estimate of Jesus Christ himself. Perhaps some pastors, overwhelmed by the incessant demands of their parishes, do not see how they can find the time to become experts on the "Dead Sea Scrolls." But when a writer like Hugh Garner pontificates on the subject in a popular magazine, our people find time to read his articles, and for want of a clear lead from their Christian teachers the foundations of their faith may be quietly worn away.

(ii) We are slowly but surely growing in our awareness of the need of "catholicity," in the sense of a wholeness of understanding that lifts us above local, confessional, or traditional limitations into the age-old, world-wide fellowship of the *Una Sancta*. But how is such a wholeness of understanding to be achieved, if not by an ever-deepening knowledge of the riches of Christian thought in every age? Again, the time for close study of these riches is hard to come by amid the constant pressures of parish life. Yet if the pastor does not make the best use he can of the various aids to study accessible to him, he must fail his flock as their appointed teacher and guide in the quest for Christian maturity in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

(iii) Great movements of Christian thought in our day have recalled us to the confession and the worship of the transcendent God, "the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6). But the Christian conviction of the supreme reality of God is assailed in our time, not simply by scientific criticism of this or that aspect of the biblical story, but by radical philosophical questioning of the validity of religious thinking itself. In an age already strongly inclined to secularism, how can the pastor

hope to preserve in himself or in his people the sense of the divine and sacred, unless he has at least faced the challenge of a criticism more subtly dangerous than blatant atheism or naive naturalism?

The *Canadian Journal of Theology* has addressed itself (and will continue to address itself) to such problems as these. We are bold enough to think that such an enterprise is not without significance for the "pastors and teachers" of the Christian community in Canada.

E. R. F.