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# "TENETS FOR TEENAGERS" : The Teaching of Christian Doctrine in Secondary Schools

by LAURENCE E. PORTER

**M**R. PORTER'S competence to deal with the important subject of Christian education is well known to our readers by this time. The following paper was read at the Graduates' Fellowship Conference at The Hayes, Swanwick, on January 2, 1960.

**T**HE subject before us this evening is one of tremendous importance, and one that has given rise to much searching of heart. Before we can, in fact, attempt very tentatively to put forward a few ideas concerning methods of doctrinal teaching, we must pause to consider the fundamental problem of whether we should teach Christian doctrine at all. It may appear strange that this question should need to be asked in a gathering of Christian graduates engaged, or even interested, in the task of Christian education, yet we all know that this very question has been a bone of contention for a century past.

To understand this we must go back in the first place to causes that lie deep in history. The England of the mid-nineteenth century was very much the England of Disraeli's *Two Nations*: the grim industrial North suspiciously eyeing the effete and sybaritic South, the ever present dichotomy of the "haves" and the "have nots," and the sturdy nonconformity of the Radicals proudly challenging that strongly entrenched fastness of privilege — the Anglican establishment. Oxford and Cambridge were still the exclusive preserve of the Church of England, and though the new University of London and, later, such institutions as Owens College at Manchester and Mason College at Birmingham might provide the intellectual benefits from which the Dissenters were cut off, they could never supply the social prestige conferred by membership of one of the more ancient Universities.

All this inevitably rankled, and it is against this background that we must set the development of a national system of education in the nineteenth century. "We must educate our masters" was a Disraelian quip, but many years before, during the era of

the Napoleonic Wars in fact, Anglicans and Nonconformists vied with each other in the encouragement of public elementary schooling through the National Society and the British and Foreign Schools Society respectively.

As the national educational system developed, the old animosities and jealousies persisted, until in 1870 the "Cowper-Temple Clause" provided that religious instruction might be permitted in the Board-Schools, so long as no formula distinctive of any religious denomination formed part of the instruction. This clause did something to provide a settlement of the long-standing dispute, but there can be no doubt that it produced at the same time a poor and emasculated content for Scripture teaching. The late Bishop Knox of Manchester told of some of the difficulties :

A first rate Aston School-Board teacher, one of the best of my Sunday School teachers, asked me whether the Clause forbade her so teaching the story of our Lord's Baptism as to convey its suggestion of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Was the doctrine of the Trinity distinctive of a religious denomination? This uncertainty led to considerable emphasis on the historical, at the expense of the doctrinal and spiritual, truths of Scripture. "School Board Religion," as it was called, came in for severe, and sometimes not undeserved, criticism<sup>1</sup>.

It is, of course, unfair to suggest that the authors of the compromise intended so meagre and unsatisfying a spiritual menu for the Schools; Mr. Cowper-Temple himself said in the House of Commons in 1876 that his Clause of 1870 would not be contravened by the teaching in any School of the Apostles' Creed, which is a formula enunciated long before the separation or emergence of any of the denominations<sup>2</sup>. But it remains a fact that many Christian teachers were uncertain as to the limitations that the Clause imposed, and were not unnaturally somewhat nervous of going too far.

We have travelled a long way since the days of those  
old, unhappy far-off things,  
And battles long ago . . .

although it is doubtless true to say that "School Board Religion" persisted for several generations, and was responsible more than any other single cause for relegating the Scripture lesson to the place of the Cinderella of the curriculum. But bit by bit there were signs that the tide was turning. The Spens Report (1938) and its successor the Norwood Report (1941) insisted on a more important place for the Divinity lesson in the work of the School,

<sup>1</sup> *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* (1935), p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, quoted in *Religion in Education* (Spring Term, 1947).

while the foundation of such bodies as the Institute of Christian Education (1934) and, may we add, our own Christian Education Committee in 1943, showed the real concern of many members of the profession.

In 1944 came the Education Act followed in the years immediately succeeding by the Agreed Syllabuses, in the compilation of which the teachers sat with representatives of the Churches and of the Local Authorities in Conference to produce schemes of work in Religious Instruction acceptable to all three parties. By many it was feared that the result could only be "Board School Religion" all over again, but happily these fears proved unfounded. *The Times*, reviewing some of these early Syllabuses, said :

In the eyes of professing Christians, Agreed Syllabuses have to "satisfy the examiners" on one major issue; do they mediate a faith which is recognizable as full-blooded Christianity, or a watered down version of that historic faith designed to suit all tastes and denominations and offend no one except a thorough-going Christian? If the latter they will be justly stigmatized as ministering to a nationalized religiosity which impedes the growth of genuine Christianity. *It may be emphatically stated that all the syllabuses here presented are entirely satisfactory on this score*<sup>3</sup>.

Speaking more generally of the Syllabuses at about the same time, Canon E. F. Braley observed :

Modern Syllabuses are not what their hostile critics affirm — a residuum of the Christian faith that remains when everything controversial has been thrown overboard<sup>4</sup>.

Times have indeed changed. There is now firmly underlying the Syllabuses from which Scripture is taught the conviction that to try to teach the Bible without its doctrines is like playing *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

It would not, however, be correct to assume that this long story of intolerance and prejudice between "Church" and "Chapel" alone led in earlier days to the neglect of doctrinal teaching in favour of a more baldly historical treatment of the sacred writings. Another cause arises no doubt from the natural distrust on the part of teachers of traditional *methods* of doctrinal instruction used by the Church, above all the method of *catechism*. The great beliefs of the Church are reduced to succinct and convenient summaries which are then taught by heart to the catechumens. Teachers brought up to more modern pedagogic ideas would feel that the summary should be the culmination rather than the pre-

<sup>3</sup> *Educational Supplement*, 15 Feb., 1947 (italics ours).

<sup>4</sup> In *Education*, 18 Apl., 1947.

miss of the instruction. W. H. Backhouse says :

The catechists were more culpable in connection with their choice of method than in their selection of material. This difficulty can be overcome if pupils are gradually led *towards* the traditional statement, which is presented at the end as a summary, or "general law," to which the enquiry has led up<sup>5</sup>.

We shall see later that formal statements of Christian doctrine are of considerable importance in Christian education, and have always been so. Even before the formulation of the great Creeds of the Early Church, if Professor C. H. Dodd<sup>6</sup> is right, the Apostolic preaching from which our Gospels developed was based on formal statements of this kind.

There can, nevertheless, be no doubt that this catechism method of religious instruction had often, in the hands of inexperienced teachers, been mechanical and soulless, and it was unfortunate that critics failed to distinguish between the material being taught and the methods adopted for imparting it, and so concluded that doctrine was altogether out of place in school teaching — a clear case of throwing out the baby with the bath-water !

But, finally, there is another reason for the doubts that arose as to the wisdom, or even the propriety, of teaching Christian doctrine in our schools, an element which, in reality, underlies the two we have already mentioned. This is the deep-seated aversion of the Englishman with his long tradition of individual liberty to anything that smacks of "indoctrination." He distrusted and detested the Jesuit claim of undisputed and permanent power over the minds of any they had for the first seven years of their lives; as generations later he was to recoil in shocked horror from the poisoning of infant minds, German and Italian, Russian and Chinese, from the wells of the totalitarian ideologies of our own century. And so, in the matter of religion, which is so personal and of which there are so many varieties, where the most earnest believers are often the most bellicose contenders against the interpretations of other believers, is it right, we are asked, is it just, that a teacher should stamp his own theological outlook on all those he teaches?

To this question there are at least two important points that can be adduced in reply.

First, there are of course many and diverse varieties and muta-

<sup>5</sup> *Religion and Adolescent Character* (1947), p. 48. On this point see also an article by A. A. David: "Christian Doctrine and the Child" (*Religion in Education*, 9, pp. 5 ff.).

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*.

tions even of orthodox Christian dogma, and it is true to say that perhaps no two genuine Christians hold exactly identical views on all the details. But on the other hand there is a great area of faith where all true Christians are united. Many are the historic interpretations of the mystery of the Atonement, but surely no one could read through the pages of the New Testament without realizing that our Lord Himself, as well as the Apostles, taught that without His death on Calvary's cross there could be no salvation for the lost, no pardon for sinners. Theologians have disputed endlessly as to all that is involved in the truth of the Incarnation, but from every page of the Gospel story shines forth the simple, indisputable fact that God took upon Him human form and went about among men doing good : "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . ." The Scripture teacher has a great corpus of doctrine which commands the assent of all true believers, without intruding his personal opinions in matters of detail.

Secondly, there is the fact that, willy-nilly, the children are imbibing doctrines; the Divinity teacher has the opportunity at least of seeing that they are put in the way of imbibing worthy and healthy doctrines. W. H. Backhouse, whom we have already quoted, says :

The use of authority and suggestion is unavoidable; and since this is the case, it may as well be healthy suggestion. Our pupils will pick up some kind of dogma; the adolescent ... needs some definite central affirmation to which he can give his loyalty and enthusiasm, and the choice is to some extent in the hands of his teachers. Remember that Germany and Italy began their work in the schools. Shall it be atheism, the dreary agnosticism of drift, one or other of the heresies which crop up from time to time, a belief and a morbid interest in the god of "luck" (a potent influence today); or shall it be the healthy and tried doctrine of the Church? <sup>7</sup>

Yes, we *must* teach doctrine as well as the bare simple "Biblical History and Literature." "Religion," said the late Bishop Spencer Leeson when he was still Head Master of Winchester :

is something different from the history of religion or social ethics or philosophy or the textual criticism of the New Testament. All these are valuable in their place, but they are not substitutes for the real thing, although in the past many teachers have escaped into them because they were afraid of the real thing.<sup>8</sup>

## II

If then we *must* teach doctrine, many practical considerations will arise. First of all, who is to teach it? A non-specialist may

<sup>7</sup> *Religion and Adolescent Character*, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> "The Teaching of the Christian Faith", *Religion in Education*, 8, p. 3.

give lessons of the simpler kind, but to teach the tenets of the faith obviously calls for something more. There must first of all be, so much is clear, a knowledge of the doctrines. There is no dearth of text-books, and the conscientious teacher will be able to prepare his lessons and to "get up" this subject like any other. But there is a further consideration; Christian dogma is something that cannot be fully understood from the outside. To grasp the richness and the glory and to trace the exquisite form and colour of the stained-glass windows of a beautiful Church we must go inside; Christian doctrine can only be adequately comprehended by those who have taken the Christ of the doctrines as their personal Saviour and Lord. "Much is often said," — it is Spencer Leeson again :

about the difficulties of teaching the Christian Faith. In reality there is nothing easier, provided two conditions can be observed: first, that the teacher should know what the Faith is, and secondly, that he should believe it. Almost all the alleged difficulties arise from the absence of these two conditions, and there is no substitute anywhere for them. If they are present, all other questions of method, text-books and so forth will in time and with experience solve themselves. <sup>9</sup>

Further than this on this point we cannot go as Scripture Teachers, for the selection of Scripture Teachers is generally outside our province. But it is a matter which will ever be present in the mind of the Christian Head Master or Head Mistress. Even so, many other factors have to be taken into account in the choice of Staff and in the assignment of the Staff that is available to Scripture teaching, and it is rare that some of the Divinity lessons are not in the hands of teachers who would readily admit that they have neither of the qualifications desiderated by Spencer Leeson. It is an urgent matter, things are certainly much better now than before 1944, but the need is still great: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

But if it is true that from one point of view this matter is not within the control of the ordinary class teacher of Divinity, there is one way at least in which he may have to make a decision. In many schools the Scripture has to be shared out — the cynic might say farmed out! — among a number of teachers. Accordingly one teacher may teach the subject to a given form or group of boys or girls throughout the five years of the main secondary course, or for one or two of them only. The odd years may be

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

consecutive, or separated from each other by a year or two with a teacher whose interest in the subject is small. We shall attempt in a later section of this paper to show that Christian doctrine can be, nay must be, an integral part of the syllabus at each stage of the School course, and that at 15 or 16 the child who has been right through the Syllabus should have been taught the main doctrines of the Christian Faith. But provision must also be made for the child who, out of the four or five years of the Course, has for only one year had his Scripture teaching from a committed Christian, and for this reason we must endeavour to arrange that during that year, whether it be the first or any other, the child will have had sound and balanced instruction in doctrine. So, while the five years of the pre-Certificate Course will form a complete study of essential dogma, at the same time each year will be a complete unit in itself.

So much, then, for the teacher. What of the body of material we select? What shall we single out as the essential tenets for teenagers? There are various enumerations of these that might be taken as a starting point. First, one might take one of the great Credal affirmations, like the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene, though these statements, arising from the needs of specific historical situations, generally lay emphasis especially on some of the doctrines at the expense rather of others. So the Apostles' Creed contains a noble statement of the Christian conception of God and of the Incarnation, but apart from the clause "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." makes scant reference to the Christian doctrine of man and sin. The Nicene gives little more except to say that He came down from Heaven to Earth *propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem*.

Another method might be to take the chapter headings of one of the standard manuals of Christian Doctrine; as an example let us take Canon T. C. Hammond's *In Understanding be Men*.<sup>10</sup> His series of topics reads as follows:—

1. Final authority in matters of faith.
2. The Godhead.
3. Man and Sin.
4. The Person and Work of Christ.
5. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.
6. The Corporate Life of the Christian.
7. The Last Things.

<sup>10</sup> I.V.F. Press, 1936 and subsequent editions.

Which of these topics do we consider essential to include in the Syllabus for children of 11 to 16? (We designate this group now, since the Sixth Form brings rather different problems, and will have to be considered separately.)

### 1. *Final Authority in matters of Faith*

It is clear that to a great extent our attitude to the Scriptures will be the *articulus stantis aut cadentis* of our teaching, for the doctrinal teaching we are trying to describe is based on the assumption that the Bible is the Revelation of God Himself, mediated to sinners by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is His message to us, not in a Barthian or subjective sense, but *per se*, objectively and absolutely. Therefore it commands our attention; therefore also its content must be true, authoritative and reliable. While we may vary in our attitude to some of the details, and differ as to the extent to which, in some parts of the Scripture, truth is communicated rather by symbolism than by historical data, we judge that all members of a Fellowship like ours would subscribe to this view of the Bible. It will come into our teaching in two ways:—

a. It will inform our attitude to every passage we read or study from the Scriptures, and our pupils will become aware that we regard the Bible as something much greater than merely the searchings and strivings of man after God.

b. In most of the Agreed Syllabuses there are sections on the making of the Old and New Testaments where questions of Inspiration and Authority must arise, and they will, of course, in various other parts, as for instance the Epistles. In reading these, are we listening to the voice of Paul or to the voice of God? Questions of this kind will give opportunities for teaching on the subject of the authority of the Bible.

To a certain extent, the question of final authority in matters of faith, then, will call for formal treatment in our teaching, but mainly its place in the Syllabus will be one of general "infiltration."

### 2. *The Godhead*

The Doctrine of God is the natural starting point of any theological study, and there are certain ideas that the child must receive. Above all, there is the apparent contradiction between His transcendence and His immanence: "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: He sitteth upon the cherubim"<sup>11</sup>. So we must present the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity,

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 99: 1.

omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and yet dwelling on the Mercy Seat in the midst of His people, delighting in mercy and in the praises and prayers of His children.

Then we shall have to show how God revealed Himself to men in three distinct aspects, and in our setting forth of the Blessed Trinity we shall have to introduce this difficult topic without attempting to cut it down to size to fit it into some neat theological pigeon-hole, rather presenting it as the great truth first implanted in the heart and consciousness of the Early Church by force of the experiences through which it was led.

We shall deal also with the fact of God the Creator, and show that the natural world the children study in the laboratory is also part of the revelation of God. Finally, the thought of God as Sovereign will introduce the problem of Predestination and Freewill, another topic where we must teach the children that reverence is a more suitable attitude than cocksureness.

### 3. *Man and Sin*

Under this heading we shall run counter to some of the most doggedly held opinions of our contemporaries. It is true that thinking people have moved a long way from Swinburne's :

Glory to Man in the Highest,

For Man is the Master of things ...

and W. E. Henley's :

It matters not how strait the gate

How charged with punishments the scroll;

I am the master of my fate,

I am the captain of my soul.

The horrors of the last half century have to a great extent dispelled this facile optimism, and many would agree with the late D. R. Davies who, surveying the ruins of a blitzed house the morning after a raid, remarked to his companion that this was original sin in operation :

She turned to me with a look of pained surprise and said : "But surely, Mr. Davies, you don't believe in that dreadful doctrine?" To which I replied : "Such dreadful happenings as these" — pointing to the ruins — "demand some sort of dreadful doctrine in explanation".<sup>12</sup>

But the doctrine of Sin is an unpleasant, unwelcome dogma, and philosophies of evolutionary perfectionism die hard. People try to by-pass the reality of sin by giving it a less jarring name. Screwtape counselled his nephew thus in the art of successful temptation :

Keep his mind off the antithesis between True and False. Nice

<sup>12</sup> *Down Peacock Feathers*, 1942, pp. 5 f.

shadowy expressions — "It was a phase" — "I've been through all that" — and don't forget the blessed word "Adolescent"<sup>13</sup>.

In the homes of many of our children, moral standards will be almost non-existent, plain theft is discounted under some euphemism like "borrowing," the football pools have taken the place of the Savings Bank, and broken homes and broken marriages are regarded as ordinary natural phenomena.

To the products of such backgrounds we must perforce teach that man is the crown of God's creation, made in God's image and likeness and by his own folly and disobedience fallen from this high destiny; that this Fall was due to Sin or rebellion against God; that all of are involved alike in this Fall and rebellion; and that in our predicament God alone can help us. The child's unawareness of this view of man and sin, of this set of eternal values, is surely the greatest obstacle we have to surmount in our teaching.

#### 4. *The Person and Work of Christ.*

The central doctrine of the New Testament is one where all our skill and resources as teachers will be called into play. The child's mind will be filled with ideas and images of our Lord, mostly vague, inaccurate and sentimental, gathered from all kinds of sources. The idyllic pictures of Bethlehem's squalid stable that adorn our Christmas cards are matched in their sentimental unreality by such vehicles of maudlin religiosity as "carols" of the type of *Mary's Boy Child*. And as often as not their acquaintance with the teaching of the Gospels will be restricted to a kind of indeterminate ethical humanism claiming our Lord as its outstanding Example.

Over against this we shall have to set a sound Biblical delineation of His Person and Work. Our first point must surely be His deity, from which all His other glories and excellencies arise. This is not in any sense, and never can be, a secondary or optional doctrine for the Christian. Even so broadminded a man as the late Bishop Henley Henson could say that "Unitarianism was a repudiation of the central Christian belief concerning the Lord Jesus Christ"<sup>14</sup>. But we must be careful also to make clear the perfect Manhood of the Redeemer, a humanity which, though subject to all the limitations and temptations of our genuine humanity, was "yet without sin"<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 1942, p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 26 March, 1934.

<sup>15</sup> Heb. 4: 15.

And with our presentation of the Person of Christ will go our exposition of His Work. Here above all we shall have the responsibility of presenting the Biblical view of Him who came, not as an Example of noble living, but as a substitute for doomed sinners :

For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.<sup>16</sup>

In our anxiety to show the grandeur of the Love of Christ shining forth from the Cross, we must not fall into the error of appearing to show an implacable, avenging God demanding satisfaction. Says D. R. Davies :

Christ was not God's transition from justice to love. He was the climax in time of God's love in eternity.<sup>17</sup>

While it is true that He "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," it is also true that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself"<sup>18</sup>.

##### 5. *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit form a topic of which many teachers are inclined to fight shy. First of all, it is rather an abstract theme, like the doctrine of the Trinity, and then further it is probably the subject in which we are most conscious of the limitations of our knowledge.

But it is none the less an important matter. The Holy Spirit is God, and the the Holy Spirit is a Person — not merely a vague kind of influence. It is by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the Bible came to God's people, and He it is who illuminates our hearts to understand it. Finally, and most important, it is He who becomes resident in our hearts at conversion, giving us the power to live as we ought, and as, unhelped, we never could.

##### 6. *The Corporate Life of the Christian*

This life of which we have been speaking cannot be lived in isolation. It is a life of love, and love must have its objects. It is natural that Christians with their common faith, their common loyalties and their common interests should gather for mutual fellowship and instruction, but this is not all that the Christian Church is. It is a God-ordained organism, the Body of Christ, a very important element in His eternal purposes. It has its God-given marks in the great sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Whatever our brand of Churchmanship or our Christian affilia-

<sup>16</sup> Mark 10: 45.

<sup>17</sup> *Down Peacock Feathers*, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Peter 2: 24 ; 2 Cor. 5: 19.

tions, we shall set before our children a high conception of the Church as the purchased people through whom our Lord is, in our day and age, revealed to the world and preached to the nations.

### 7. *The Last Things*

Eschatology is perhaps the subject which most divides Christians, at all events Evangelical Christians ! These disputes with which holy men have, as Addison said in his day, divided the world, we shall be careful not to obtrude upon our scholars, but there is a minimum of eschatological truth without which the Christian gospel cannot be deemed complete. It is not of prime importance that our teenagers should know whether the Church will go through the Tribulation, or whether the Millennium will precede or follow the Rapture, but it is important that they should know the He who is the Lord of History will at the last day sit upon the Throne of Judgement, and that the end of History as we know it will be, not some cataclysmic nuclear explosion, nor yet a marvellous man-made Millennium, but the personal intervention in power of Him who once came a Babe to Bethlehem's manger. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ... For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout ... He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry ..." <sup>19</sup>.

### III

Having surveyed the material we shall want to impart to our pupils, and indicated some of the particular emphases we shall wish to make, the question remains, *how* shall we do it? Two important factors must be considered when we examine this question of method.

First, we are teachers of Divinity or Religious Instruction or Scripture Knowledge (whatever our School time-table or Examination syllabus calls it!), under an obligation to teach our subject in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus, made mandatory by the Local Education Authority on all its teachers. The content of these syllabuses, in their pre-Sixth Form Sections at least, contains little provision as a rule for formal lessons on doctrine as such, and so the medium of our doctrinal teaching will have to be the Bible narratives and history set down in the Syllabus.

And secondly, there is a far more compelling reason why our teaching should take this form. We have to remember that in one way — let us say it with all humility and reverence — our

<sup>19</sup> Jn. 14: 3 ; 1 Thess. 4: 16 ; Heb. 10: 37.

situation in the Schools bears some resemblance to that of our Lord Himself in His teaching activity, and so it behoves us to study the methods with which He met the situation. He had a limited time for His ministry of instruction, and during the time He had He must store the minds of His hearers with that which was to be their sustenance in the long years afterwards when He would be no longer with them. So our task as teachers of Christian doctrine is to some extent similar: with our thoughts on the years ahead as much as the immediate present, we seek to furnish our pupils' minds with a body of instruction some of which at least will not 'come to life' for many a long year. Wordsworth saw the daffodils the day he "wandered lonely as a cloud," but it was years later that he entered into the full appreciation and understanding of what he had seen :

When oft upon my couch I lie,  
 In vacant or in pensive mood.  
 They flash upon the inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude.  
 And then my heart with pleasure fills  
 And dances with the daffodils.

Our Lord's method of providing for this situation was to put His teaching into a sort of tabloid form; parables and metaphors, couplets and paradoxes. How unforgettable these are, and how indelibly they must have impressed themselves on the memories of the hearers, if indeed He did not, as some students of Gospel origins tell us, actually teach them by heart. The meaning no doubt would pass above the heads of the Galilean fishermen or Judaeon peasants who listened; how could they, even with the advantage denied to us of hearing them in the fulness of their actual context, grasp the significance of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard or of the Sower and the Seeds, or of a Saying like the great Ransom passage of Mk. x 45? But the Parables and Sayings were implanted securely in people's memories, and in the light of subsequent events how they would acquire meaningfulness, the Holy Spirit continuing in the consciousness of the Early Church as a whole what the Lord began on the Emmaus Road, interpreting to them "the things concerning Himself" not only in the Old Testament Scriptures but in His oral teaching as well<sup>20</sup>. This, certainly, will be our soundest approach to our own doctrinal teaching. The seed must be sown, the fruit will come in due season.

When we examine the Agreed Syllabuses in use in the various

<sup>20</sup> Lk. 24: 25 ff.

Counties and Boroughs we find that despite a great and natural variety there are certain fundamental elements in common<sup>21</sup>. The five years of the main secondary school course seem generally to be dealt with along the following lines :—

1. *The first two years* (11-13)

The main outlines of the Biblical History are covered. The Old Testament, starting with Abraham, the stories of the Patriarchs, Moses, the Oppression in Egypt, the Exodus, the settlement in Canaan. Samuel and the Foundation of the Monarchy. David, Solomon and the Divided Kingdom. The Prophets, the Exile and the Return, and on to the Roman period. In the New Testament, the Life of Christ and the beginnings of the Christian Church in *Acts*.

2. *The Third and Fourth Years* (13-15)

During the middle school section of the Course, the Bible is worked over again in greater detail, showing God revealing Himself to His chosen people through their history, examining the Teaching of Jesus and the message of the Prophets and the Epistles.

3. *The Fifth Year* (15-16)

Here various suggestions are made; sometimes a portion of the Bible (e.g. the Sermon on the Mount, the Fourth Gospel) to be studied in detail, or a period of Church History, or sometimes something much more general, e.g. an outline of "The Christian Life" or "Christian Faith and Work."

This scheme, of course, is not adhered to by all the Syllabuses. Some spend three years instead of two on the preliminary survey; others introduce a great deal more in the way of Church History, emphasizing in some cases its more local aspects, in others heroes of Christian testimony in recent times; while there are some which have other characteristics of their own. But for our general purpose this outline will serve.

In the first section the emphasis is on the narrative, as we have seen, but even to the mind of the eleven-year old, deeper questions will occur. In the "Abraham to Moses" section we begin with the fact that God *called* Abraham. Quite a number of doctrinal implications are latent here at the very outset; God communicates with man, this is His self-revelation. He directs

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the surveys in the Victoria Institute paper of G. S. Humphreys on "The Use of the Bible in School Education" (*Trans. Vict. Inst.*, lxxx [1948], pp. 78-100), and in an article by the present writer on "The Agreed Syllabus" (*THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY*, xx [1948], pp. 252-271).

Abraham to journey to a new home, here is His claim to man's obedience, and His providential planning for each of His creatures. He withholds from Abraham exact knowledge of his destination, introducing the element of faith and trust. So we could take any of these stories, and pick out any number of points related to the topics we have enumerated as essential doctrines. This does not mean that we must go counter to the spirit of the Agreed Syllabus by using these stories just as pegs on which to hang doctrinal teaching; they are narrative, history, and to the eleven year old we shall teach them as such.

But teaching is to great extent a matter of selection, and in deciding on the lessons we want to draw from these stories, we shall try so to plan our term's work that the important headings of Christian doctrine receive their due proportion of attention. If our children keep, as they ought, and as is becoming more universally the practice, note-books of their Scripture lessons, we shall see to it that they include definite references to this side of things. The amount recorded each week or even month will not be great, but by the end of the second year there will be a solid foundation on which to build over the next two years.

When we come to this second stage, our doctrinal teaching will have its feet firmly planted in the consecutive study of the Scriptures, in other words our theology will still be Biblical rather than Systematic, but doctrinal teaching will assume a larger place. Care will be taken to ensure that the doctrines, though not taught formally nor under our seven headings, will be comprehensive, balanced and sound. Many teachers find at this point that diagrams, built up on the blackboard and copied into the notebooks, help to fix things in the mind, and passages to be committed to memory will be carefully chosen to crystallize the ideas that have been under consideration.

The final year (15-16) provides the ideal place for an attempt at a systematic presentation of what a Christian believes, and its inextricable connection with how a Christian behaves; though presumably in the Secondary Modern School which loses most of its pupils at 15 this will come, if at all, in the latter part of the fourth year. Some of the Syllabuses seem quite vague as to what to do in the fifth year, and here is the teacher's opportunity. If the work has been properly done lower down the School, he will have a sound foundation on which to build a truly Biblical course of Christian Doctrine.

Finally a word about the Sixth Form. Here, problems are

different, we are dealing with boys and girls who ought to be mature enough to grasp abstract ideas, and so some of the difficulties we have mentioned in the earlier part of the curriculum should no longer arise. Others will no doubt step into their place!

First, there is the proneness of the average Sixth-Former to omniscience, especially, in a subject like this where he is shackled by no inconvenient limitations like examinations. That this omniscience can be trying or irritating is not relevant to our present enquiry; what is pertinent is that it usually gives rise to a complete inability to keep to the point in the discussions which naturally at this stage form a continually increasing part of our lessons. Discussions on specific points of the Christian faith will tend, if we are not watchful, to wander off into World affairs or Social problems or Communism or some other delightfully inviting by-path. Against this the teacher must resolutely set his face, or the value of his work will evaporate and his pupils' concepts become vague and diffuse.

Secondly there is the tendency for Sixth-Formers, especially those on the science side, perhaps, to assume that Divinity, lacking the technological exactness and advanced skills of the laboratory bench and the examination studies proper, is therefore in some way inferior as an intellectual discipline. We shall probably never entirely dispel this feeling, but we can at least see to it that by unremitting study and wide reading our presentation of our subject is at least scholarly and efficient.

Above all we must remember that Sixth-Formers are still teenagers. Many of them are quite bewildered in a world adrift, and they have their own very real problems, not least that of feeling themselves a drag on self-sacrificing parents and having to make do on pocket money meagre indeed beside the princely resources of their own contemporaries who have left school and gone to work. Through the balanced presentation of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures which are able to "make wise unto salvation," we may be privileged to play our part in providing them with the stable foundation they so desperately need.

We have very briefly considered *whether* we should teach Christian Doctrine in our Schools, *who* should do it, and *how* it can be done within the framework of our Agreed Syllabuses. There remains now the very important question which should ever be in our minds, *why* do we teach it? What is our aim?

From the very first, the Christian mission has had a two-fold

task; preaching and teaching, proclamation and instruction, "making disciples ..., teaching them ...," κήρυγμα and διδασχή. In the classroom, of course, we are engaged in the second part of this work, teaching. Our aim is evangelistic also, in that we long for the conversion of our pupils, but our method is pedagogic in that we are instructing them thoroughly and systematically in the Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation. So the first aim of our work is to lay the foundations of a sound knowledge of the Gospel of God's redeeming grace in the Lord Jesus Christ that can, in God's good time, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, bring them to an experimental knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and of being born again a new man in Christ.

But there is a second aim as well. How much distress and difficulty arises in the Church from "lop-sided" Christians, and from shallow Christians who never seem to grow. If our teaching of Christian doctrine is sound, efficient and well-balanced, our children when they are converted will surely develop these same qualities, and become men of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...," said Christ to His disciples; and to Peter: "Feed My lambs ...". In communicating to the children committed to our care the high doctrines of the Gospel of the Grace of God, surely we are doing just this.

*Birkenhead.*