

Editorial

The most recent Downside Symposium volume, *Theology and the University*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, is of crucial importance. Broadly speaking it deals with the question of how to help lay people to become theologically literate: the central concern of English Catholics today, one to which the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT has been mainly devoted in recent years. More particularly, the book discusses the problems of Catholic participation in theological departments at our secular universities. Now that university education has long since ceased to be the privilege of the few, and is increasingly thought of as something in which all reasonably intelligent people can expect to share, entry of Catholics into theology departments to teach and to learn, on the same terms of equality that they enjoy in other university disciplines, will constitute the most decisive break-through since university education became available to them at all. As Fr Charles Davis points out in the book, it would both make theology available to laymen and at the same time make them available to the needs of theology—it is the second part of the antithesis that ultimately will be the more vital. Whereas in other countries people have had recourse to special Catholic faculties or even to special Catholic universities, England will be giving the Christian world a lead in ecumenical integration. For this is no mere hypothetical situation. There is now a real possibility of a start being made at the University of Bristol, rightly in a modest and experimental way, though with great potentialities for the future. We owe a great deal to the Bishop of Clifton and to the Bristol university authorities for their wisdom and foresight in the promotion of this project.

Recently a further meeting, more public than the normal Downside symposia, was held at Leicester university to discuss the general principles on which a suitable syllabus for such courses might be planned. The papers given there are to appear in book form in the near future, but in the meantime their general interest to all those concerned with deeper understanding of their faith—to all readers of this journal, in fact—warrants their immediate publication here. Of the five papers read, the first three appear in the present issue; two of them are written from within the Anglican tradition, since the ecumenical dimension to the project is so important. The last two (both by Catholics) are

longer, but it is hoped to find room for them shortly. They deal with liturgy and with the relationship of theology and literary studies respectively. Together with the papers in this issue they provide a valuable indication of the way in which every thinking Christian, whether or not at the university, can approach the renewed understanding of scripture and tradition. These papers do not presuppose a reading of the symposium volume to which they so frequently refer (though this might be necessary with the comments that Dr Markus has made on the university course itself). But it is hard to imagine any forward looking English Catholic who will not wish to have a copy of *Theology and the University* on his shelves.