

EDITORIAL

THE present number of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, a double number for August and September, has *Bible and Worship* for its theme. This is a comprehensive subject; its concern is the necessary part played by the Scriptures in God's revelation of himself to men, and in consequence the fundamental importance of the study of that revelation as it is contained in the written Word of Scripture. To say this is not to put forward the Bible and the study of the Bible as in itself the sole ultimate, as the direct and only source, for the individual, of God's Word to men. That would be to by-pass the Church, as in effect the Church was by-passed by Protestantism at the Reformation, with disastrous consequences to Christendom. The Bible can only be understood to the fullest possible depth through the mind of the Church, which alone can penetrate into and give the whole meaning of God's Word.

The mind of the Church finds its most effective expression in the Liturgy. This does not mean that the creeds, which are in fact included in the Liturgy, and other formal dogmatic definitions made by the Church and contained in decrees, catechisms and other instruments of its teaching authority, are of secondary importance. It does mean, however, that the truth embodied in the Church's dogmatic definitions is only made living and effective truth by its personal expression in worship. Our personal worship of God, which is nothing else than our personal share in the Church's common worship, must be offered in and through the Liturgy. This is why Sunday Mass is an obligation on all the baptized, who have reached the age of reason. We cannot obtain salvation unless we worship God, who made us, redeemed us and sanctifies us, and the worship we offer him must be offered in and through Christ in his Church; that is, in and through the Mass in which Christ is and which is in consequence the official act of worship of Christ's Mystical Body, the very heart and centre of its life.

The most perfect way of offering the Mass is by offering it in the spirit and according to the meaning of the words the Church uses in offering it. For priests and religious the Divine Office is integral to their offering of the Mass. The Mass stands as the

central jewel in the diadem of worship which is the offering of Christ to his Father in the Church, his Mystical Body. As members of that Body we are co-offerers with him of his perfect oblation.

Both Mass and Divine Office are profoundly Scriptural in content; they may be described as God's Word in action, the action of Praise, Adoration and Thanksgiving which the Eternal Word continuously and eternally expresses, and expresses, here and now, largely in the inspired words of Scripture. Thus it is part of the priestly and religious vocation to lead the whole Church on earth, in the fullest and most complete way possible, in making this continuous act of worship in and through Christ our Lord. All baptized Christians are able to share in this act at its central point, through the Mass. Many, however, are unable to take part in the surrounding worship of the Divine Office because their vocation, the work to which they are called, prevents them from active participation in it.

Yet there is a growing consciousness in the Church that active participation in the liturgy of the Mass would be far more effective and more deeply achieved if the knowledge of its content and meaning were deeper, and this applies in particular to its Scriptural content. The Holy See has done much in recent years to encourage this more effective participation in the spirit and meaning of the words the Church uses in the offering of Mass. There is also a growing movement among the laity to take, when possible, some part in the Divine Office, as preparation for the offering of the Holy Sacrifice.

Some of the articles in this number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* describe individual experiments by families and communities in ways and means of acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures as the way to a deeper knowledge of God. Others are concerned with the approach to the offering of Mass by way of the Divine Office, said either in part or as a whole, in English or in Latin; others again deal with the nature of the Scriptures as the source of God's revealed truth, and therefore as the *material* of worship. All are designed in their different ways to promote amongst Christians, in every state of life, a deeper knowledge of God's Word written and in consequence a deeper union with Christ in the mysteries of his redeeming love. For as St Jerome once wrote: *Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.*