

yes
+
yes
yes

THE NATURE, PURPOSE AND ADVANTAGES OF THE SUMMER
SCHOOL OF SACRED THEOLOGY

Submitted by:

Sr. M. Benvenute, O.P.

Sister Paul Francis, O.P.

Sister Mary Ellen, O.P.

Sister Clarita Marie, O.P.

July 10, 1949

PROLOGUE

In his Prologue to the Summa Theologica St. Thomas makes the following statement: The Doctor of Catholic Truth ought not only to instruct the proficient, but also to teach beginners. Now the term beginner may be taken in two ways: (1) as regards the members of the Summer School of Sacred Theology who are pursuing their studies in the Summa Theologica; (2) as any honest inquirer after the truth who is seeking information for the first time concerning the nature and order of Thomistic teaching as presented in the Summer School of Sacred Theology of Providence College. Since the members of the former group in their enthusiasm for Thomistic study and its allied subjects need no objective persuasions to convince them of the excellence of the college, this treatise is designed for the enlightenment of those who do not have a clear understanding of its nature, purpose, and advantages.

If in this document the authors have inadvertently made any statements contrary to faith and morals, *they* hereby recant.

QUESTION I

Of the Summer School of Sacred Theology for Sisters at Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island

(In Three Articles)

In considering the Summer School of Sacred Theology the treatise will be threefold: (1) Its nature; (2) its purpose; (3) its values. Under the first head there are three points of inquiry: (1) Whether the object of the Summer School of Sacred Theology is First Truth? (2) Whether the Summer School of Sacred Theology at Providence College is superior to other Summer Schools of Sacred Theology claiming a similar objective? (3) Whether the consideration of First Truth is more or less explicitly in the members of religious communities of women as its subject?

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether the object of the Summer School of Sacred Theology is First Truth?

We proceed thus to the First Article:--

Objection 1. It would seem that the object of the Summer School of Sacred Theology is not First Truth. For it is apparent that the object of the Summer School is that which is proposed for study. Now things not only pertaining to First Truth are proposed for study, but also matters concerning Holy Scripture, Canon Law, and Church History. Therefore the object of the Summer School is not First Truth.

On the contrary, As its official name indicates, the Summer School is concerned with the study of theology. Now theology has as its object First Truth. Therefore the object of the Summer School is First Truth.

I answer that, on the authority of the President and of the Director of the Summer School, "The proper approach to the deposit of faith under the guidance of St. Thomas is to be found in the Summa Theologica." Since the course is principally concerned with the Summa Theologica, the ponderous volumes of which treat of First Truth, the object of Summer School is First Truth.

Reply Obj. 1. Theology is adequately defined as "A science of God by which human reason, basing its principles on faith and revelation, deduces certain truths about God and other things in their relation to Him." Since the study of Sacred Scripture, Canon Law, and Church History is presented under the aspect of allied sciences, they cannot be considered as the primary concern of the Summer School. Hence it follows that the object of the Summer School of Sacred Theology is First Truth.

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether the Summer School of Sacred Theology at Providence College is superior to other summer schools of Sacred Theology claiming similar objectives?

We proceed thus to the Second Article:--

Objection 1. It would seem that the Summer School of Sacred Theology at Providence College is not superior to other summer schools of Sacred Theology, for the other schools likewise have as their object the study of First Truth.

On the contrary, that which is essential is prior to that which is accidental. (Summa Theologica I, Q. 3, A. 6).

I answer that, that which is nearest the source of truth is the higher principle. Now the Summa Theologica, which is the basic text used at Providence College, may be compared to The Companion to the Summa, used in other Summer Schools of Sacred Theology, as a higher to a lower principle. Therefore the text book nearer to the source of First Truth, used at Providence College, is Summa Theologica. Furthermore the S.S.S.T. at Providence College is superior in other ways and that for two reasons: (1) On the "released time" plan, not in use at other colleges, the students are free from every other occupation but study. (2) Their residence on campus obviates the necessity of much commuting, thereby conserving both time and energy. This suffices for the Reply to the First Objection.

THIRD ARTICLE

Whether the consideration of First Truth is more or less explicitly in the members of religious communities of women as its subject?

We proceed thus to the Third Article:--

Objection 1: There are some who hold that the study of First Truth should be reserved to members of the regular and the secular clergy, since woman is not fitted by nature for the pursuit of study in the realms of speculative knowledge. As the Angelic Doctor states: "Man is yet further ordered to still nobler vital action, and that is intellectual operation." (Summa Theologica, I, Q. 92, A. 1)

On the contrary; It is written (Summa Theologica, II,II, Q.2, A6)"those to whom it pertains to instruct others are bound to a more complete knowledge of the articles of faith and to believe more explicitly."

I answer that, As teachers in our Catholic schools, the sisters are, according to the Director of the S.S.S.T., "in the forefront of the battle where the truths of religion are challenged or misunderstood," (Brochure of the S.S.T, Providence College, 1949). It is therefore incumbent upon them "to seek every opportunity to deepen and broaden their theological knowledge." (Ibid.) Hence it is eminently fitting that a thorough and adequate consideration of First Truth be in the members of religious communities of women as its subject.

Reply Obj. 1: Further it is written (Jerem. VI, 13): From the least of them even to the greatest, all study . . . " Also the Philosopher observes at the beginning of his Metaphysics (I,I): All men have a natural desire for knowledge. But woman is included in the generic term Man. Now God would not have implanted in woman a natural desire for knowledge if she were not fitted by nature to attain it, for "a man is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek." (Summa Theologica, I, Q.3, A. 7.)

QUESTION II
(In two articles)

Of the purpose of the Summer School of Sacred Theology

Having treated of the nature of the S.S.S.T., we have now to consider its purpose, which is two-fold. The points of inquiry are: (1) Whether the primary purpose of the S.S.S.T. is the sanctification of its members? (2) Whether its secondary purpose is to train its members for their role as teachers of religion?

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether the primary purpose of the S.S.S.T. is the sanctification of its members?

We proceed thus to the First Article:--

Objection 1: It would seem that the primary purpose of the S.S.S.T. is not the sanctification of its members because they have been sent away from their respective communities for the purpose of study. But the proper matter of studiousness is knowledge. (Summa Theologica II, II, Q. 166, A. 1.) But knowledge is not to be erroneously identified with sanctity; hence the primary purpose of the S.S.S.T. is not the sanctification of its members.

On the contrary; the Angelic Doctor states: (Summa Theologica, II, II, Q. 81, A. 8) Sanctity is to be ascribed to those things that are applied to the Divine worship.

I answer that, each member of the S.S.S.T. begins the day by attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion, by meditating upon Divine Truth as expounded by St. Thomas, and performing other works of piety enjoined by her community for her sanctification. Therefore the primary purpose of the S.S.S.T. is the sanctification of its members.

Reply Obj. 1. Knowledge in this sense may be devoid of charity. But it is to be expected that, since the members of the S.S.S.T. attend Divine worship, thereby increasing the virtue of charity in their souls, and pursue their studies with the motive of honoring God thereby, the knowledge they acquire tends to their sanctification. For in the words of the Angelic Doctor, it is by sanctity that the human mind applies itself and its acts to God. (Summa Theologica II, II, Q. 81, A. 8.)

SECOND ARTICLE

Whether the secondary purpose of the S.S.S.T. is to train its members for their role as teachers of religion?

We proceed thus to the Second Article:

Objection 1. It would seem, according to the Brochures issued by the S.S.S.T., that the training of teachers of religion is not the secondary purpose but its primary aim. For no mention is made of the many spiritual privileges at the disposal of its members. Therefore it is to be assumed that the training of teachers is its chief objective.

On the contrary: Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere is the ideal of Dominican life.

I answer that, it is safe to assume therefore, that an educational institution directed by the Friar Preachers would regard sanctification as the primary purpose, simultaneously keeping in view the secondary purpose to give others the fruits of contemplation. Furthermore, in order to do so, the teacher of religion must have an explicit knowledge of her faith. "Those to whom it pertains to instruct others are bound to a more complete knowledge of the articles of faith. . ." (Summa Theologica, II, II, Q.2, A. 6.) It is therefore pre-eminently suitable for the Friars Preachers, in response to the exhortation of the Sovereign Pontiff, that they "do their best to instill the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas into the minds of their hearers; and . . . clearly point out its solidity and excellence above all other teaching." (Leo XIII, Aeterni Patris)

Reply Obj. 1. To those who hold this objection, be it advised that they read the Brochures of S.S.S.T., Providence, 1948, 1949 with greater perspicacity. They will find that the spiritual advantages are contained therein by implication.

QUESTION III

Of the Advantages of the Summer School of Sacred Theology

(In one Article)

In due sequence we must consider the advantages pertaining to the aforesaid, which are twofold (1) Supernatural, (2) Natural. The subject of the first division has been adequately treated in Q. 2, A.1-2. Under the second head, there is one point of inquiry: Whether the natural advantages are suitably categorized as (1) nutritive, (2) social and (3) educational?

FIRST ARTICLE

Whether the natural advantages of the S.S.S.T. are suitably categorized as nutritive, social and educational?

We proceed thus to the First Article:

Objection 1. It would seem that the natural advantages of the S.S.S.T. are not suitably categorized since they do not include the migratory aspect. Furthermore, the expense connected with this element is regarded as prohibitory by some.

Obj. 2: As the Philosopher says, (Ethics. ii. 9) in order to be virtuous we must avoid those things to which we are most naturally inclined. Man is most naturally inclined to seek food as a means of preserving his life. Therefore it is not suitable to include the nutritive as a substantial part of the advantages.

On the contrary, the natural advantages of the S.S.S.T. are suitably categorized as nutritive, social, and educational. According to right reason they stand as presented (we hope).

We answer that, the nutritive, social, and educational aspects of the

Summer School are essential to the perfection of its act. Now the perfection of the S.S.S.T. could not be realized without these three elements, for a subject to be reduced from potency to act is for it to accept a perfection which it had not before but was merely capable of possessing. (Georges, Metaphysics, p. 13). Now this can be in two ways: (1) on the part of the college itself, (2) on the part of its members. With regard to the latter, the nutritive element tends to the perfection of S.S.S.T., by rendering it possible for its members to operate. Likewise, according to St. Thomas, (Summa Theologica, II, II, Q. 32, A. 3.) "A man in hunger is to be fed rather than instructed." As for the social element the same argument holds because, on the authority of Augustine (Music, ii, 15), I pray thee spare thyself at times: for it becomes a wise man sometimes to relax the high pressure of his attention to work. Thomas adds: Now this relaxation of the mind from work consists in playful words or deeds. Therefore it becomes a wise and virtuous man to have recourse to such thing at times. (Summa Theologica, II, II, Q. 168, A. 2). For this reason S.S.S.T. not only provides ample means for wholesome social life but also exhorts its members to partake thereof that they may not only refresh themselves but also that they may become better acquainted with the other religious communities. The intellectual advantages have been adequately treated (we hope) in Q. 2, A. 2.).

Reply Obj. 1: The migratory aspect, since it is allied to the science of geography, is for this reason under the heading of education. Therefore there is no need for a separate answer. It is to be noted further, according to the authority of the Angelic Doctor, that although sense and appetite are principles of movement in perfect animals, yet sense and appetite as such are not sufficient to cause movement unless another power be added to them. (Summa Theologica I, Q. 78, A. 1, ad 4). Now this mode of power renders to any mode of transportation required for reaching S.S.S.T. as necessary. As for the expense which of necessity accompanies travel, let us recall the words of Holy Scripture: (Ecclus. XXIX, 13, 14) Lose thy money for thy brother. . . place thy treasure in the commandments of the Most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold. Since good by its very nature is diffusive, the good of the individual redounds to the common good.

Reply Obj. 2: The authority of Augustine will suffice in this case wherein he states: (Gen. ad lit. Xii, 35) If the body be such that the governance thereof is difficult and burdensome . . . the mind is turned away from that vision of the highest heaven.

*.*****