

LEARNING – FOR THE SAKE OF LEARNING

An inordinate love for knowledge – learning for the sake of learning, intellectual curiosity and all such like – is quite dangerous to the soul and must be overcome. Many harmful consequences result from this fault which imperceptibly and inevitably leads to intellectual superiority and intellectual pride.

We must discriminate with regard to knowledge as with bodily nourishment. Too much fine food overburdens the stomach. Too much knowledge puffs up the mind. Knowledge is not the highest good; truth stands higher. Without truth, knowledge is mere deceit and falsehood. Besides, knowledge is not necessary for the salvation of one's soul. Therefore, study and inquiry and research must follow a certain order: we must learn first what is necessary, then what is useful, and then what is pleasant.

Today, the easy availability of finger-tip information is having some harmful results, because the uninstructed and the inexperienced use finger-tip information in a vain attempt to influence the affairs of men. Knowledge (information) without experience is a dangerous thing. An over emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge easily leads to inflexibility and hardness in our views and judgements. A pious state of mind cannot exist side by side with hardness of mind. A solid understanding of the spiritual life cannot exist side by side with hardness of mind. Piety – the spiritual life – the interior life – are always united to simplicity, kindness and humility, and none of these virtues are to be found linked together with any form of obstinacy of judgement. At the same time, obstinacy of judgement makes us unloving and unloved – it tends to isolate us and envelope us with the dark clouds of sadness and moodiness. We become unwelcome. Intellectual hardness is a kind of fanaticism, and does not always make for truth. One is best out of the way of fanatics.

Intellectual obstinacy is the enemy of all truth and knowledge. There has never been a heresy but took its rise from the madness of private judgement. We all know the havoc that private judgement has played on religious belief – ESPECIALLY TODAY. Private judgement does not pause even before God and the deposit of Faith. It rejects not only speculative truth but moral truth as well, and often, even the practical knowledge and prudence with regard to life that resides in the intellect. There is nothing more imprudent than willfulness and obstinacy in one's own opinion. It is lunacy to really believe that we possess vast quantities of knowledge. Actually the volume of our ignorance is far greater than the volume of our knowledge. To be able to think for ourselves is surely good, but it is also good and often better to listen and accept what others have to say. The more truly learned a man is, the more eager he is to listen to the words of others. Knowledge of self is the best remedy against stubbornness, for it makes us humble and wise. The knowledge that we here speak of is not to be confused with the Knowledge which is a Gift of the Holy Spirit. That Knowledge is in a separate and distinct category – altogether.