

Ian Hislop, the provincial of the English Dominicans until early this year, died in University College Hospital on 2nd of October. He was the son of a distinguished minister in the Church of Scotland. Though born in Glasgow he spent most of his young life in Galloway (with occasional trips across the water to Larne) for he had to leave Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh after a severe polio illness when he was twelve; it left him crippled for the rest of his life. He never lost his feel for the country and was, in fact, for many years a member of the Aberdeen Angus Society. Nor, more importantly, did he ever cease to be a child of the manse. He was, by general consent, the best preacher in this province of the Order of Preachers and there is no doubt at all that family tradition contributed to this.

He became a Roman Catholic while a student at Edinburgh and joined the Dominicans in 1937. For twenty-four years, from 1950 onwards he was prior of one house or another until he was elected provincial in 1966. At the time of his election the province was having a good deal of difficulty. It is an experience that has been repeated in most religious orders though it seemed to hit the English Dominicans earlier than most, and it was largely due to Ian that the province held together and even shows signs of having resolved a great many of the problems.

It was a period in which many of the most intelligent and dedicated young men found the religious life, in the form that had been perpetuated with only minor changes since the nineteenth century, both irksome and insufficiently demanding. They left in large numbers. Those that remained found themselves isolated from many of the older members of the province. It was partly the fact that Ian so evidently loved all of us that prevented a splitting of the province. Within twelve months he also had to cope with the ludicrous attack on this journal by Roman curial officials and others, and he showed a rare combination of loyalty to his brethren and skill in handling foolish people in high places. No one would claim that all is now well with the English Dominican province but it has passed through a radical transformation of many of its structures as a fairly united family, it attracts a reasonable number of new members and it is a happier, more relaxed and more loving community than it was ten years ago; we will not try to judge whether it is doing its job more effectively. It is extremely doubtful whether any of this would have been achieved without Ian Hislop.

In 1966 he was already an invalid with a seriously damaged constitution in addition to the effects of the polio. He brought a faithful acceptance of suffering and a precarious hold on life to the service of

his brethren, and hence to the Church, in search for union with the Father through the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. He also brought a clear and unsentimental vision of social realities—he once remarked that as a student he had been attracted by communism but had since moved to the left. He belonged to an identifiable tradition of Scottish radicalism, and gentlemen from further south found his attitudes always astringent and sometimes harsh. He believed that the preaching of the word called for a sensitivity to the personal and social needs of the other which established, he thought, a unique relationship in the brotherhood of Christ.

He was not an even-tempered man but he would listen sympathetically and make a real effort to understand any of the brethren, however grotesque he found their views. Coming from the democratic tradition of Scotland he found much in the Catholic Church and in England to amuse him and a fair amount to irritate him. He was particularly impatient of racism and devoted all the energy he could spare to work among the West Indian community in London. He was passionately concerned for the West Indies and this perhaps brought him the greatest pain of his life, first when Irenaeus Alexander died (see *New Blackfriars*, October 1973) and then, after his resignation, when for medical reasons he had to refuse the immediate invitation to share the life of the brethren in the West Indies.

'I see radical and painful changes that are to come and test us', he said to the students of the province three years ago, 'but equally clearly I see a new birth among us, as God makes all things new. It will be your world, and, somewhere, I shall be watching'. It is an all-seeing eye whose well-remembered mixture of love and irascibility should keep us up to the mark.